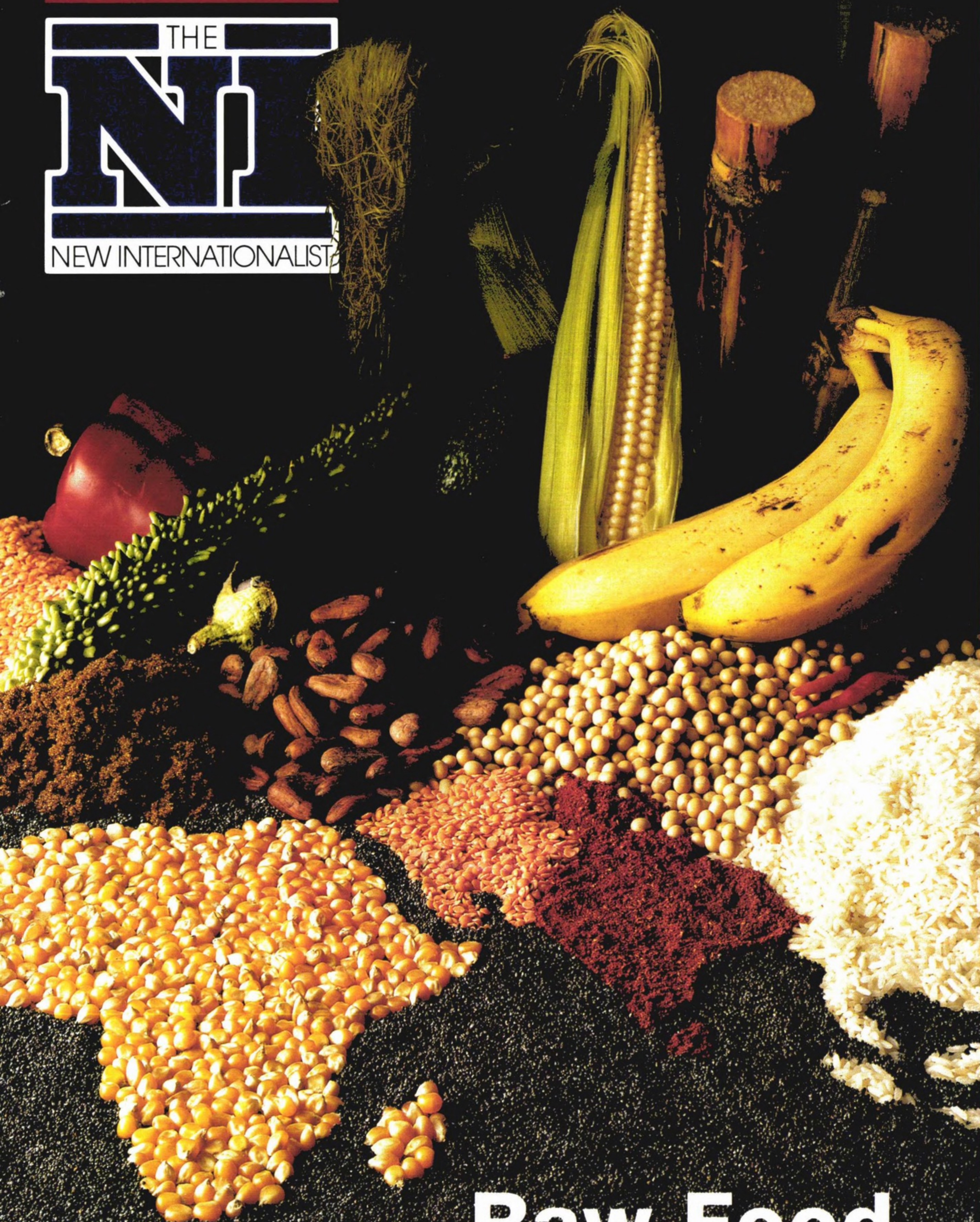


No. 225 / NOVEMBER 1991

THE
NI
NEW INTERNATIONALIST



Raw Food

people, plants & politics

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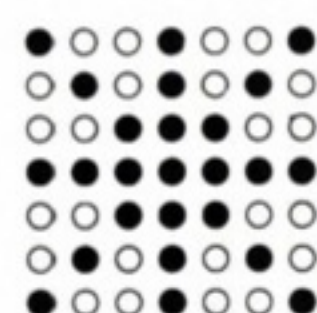
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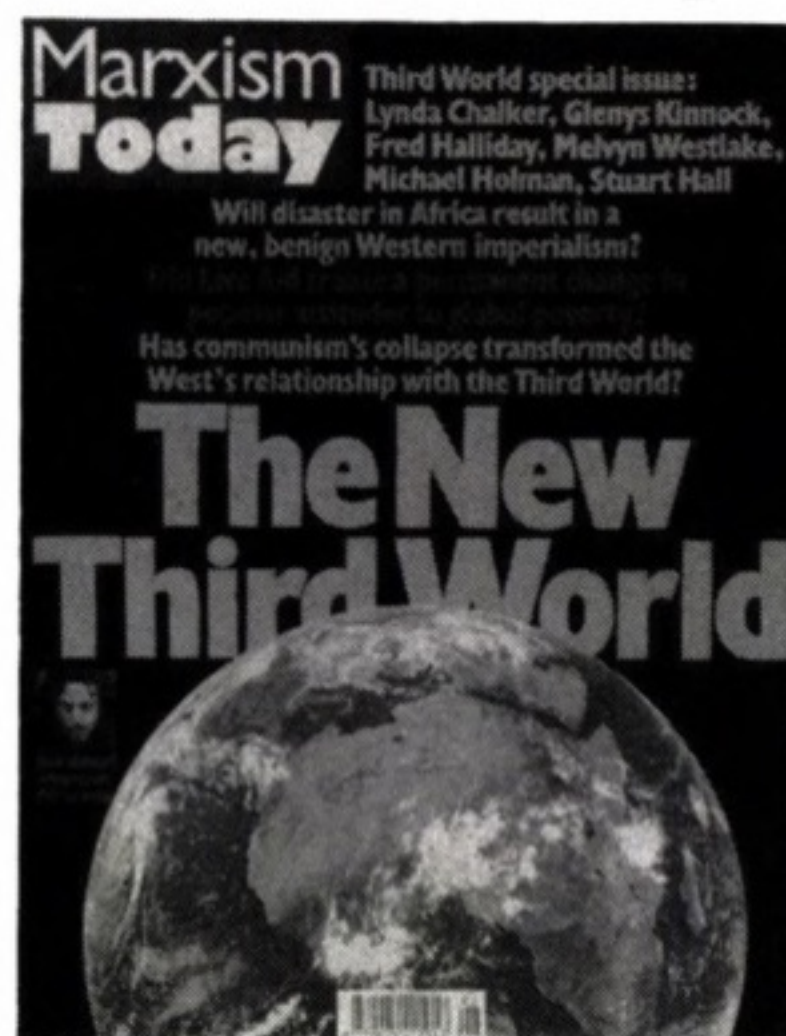
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THIS MONTH'S THEME

World Food

FROM THIS MONTH'S EDITOR

YOU probably know the feeling. You're at a meeting, and you have an idea. People like it, are enthusiastic even. And then, as they look towards you again, the penny drops and you realise that they are looking at you expectantly. 'Yes, it's not a bad idea – why don't you do it?'

That's roughly what happened with this magazine. At our annual magazine-planning meeting last year I suggested an issue on food. I didn't mean that I should edit it, but my colleagues were quick to point out that the *NI Food Book* had just been published, that I had been mainly responsible for producing it, that what I had learned about the subject must have given me a clear head start... There was no resisting all the arguments: the food mag was mine.

The subject of world food is both enormous and enormously complicated. So to try and keep it manageable I wanted to look closely at just six foods which are well known to us and which have an illuminating history and culture: maize/corn, sugar, rice, soybeans, bananas and cocoa. These foodstuffs can be dressed up in all kinds of different ways – and we have suggested how they might be used as part of a 'world meal'.

But our thought was to go further and talk to people in the Third World whose lives are intimately bound up with the six foods. Instead of compiling a series of articles looking at different aspects of world food production, we thought we'd make a point of seeking out the perspective of people who are usually invisible and unheard. You must have wondered every now and then who is at the other end of the chain that brings a banana to your kitchen. Who picked it? In what conditions? How do they feel about it? Does our buying bananas help them or contribute somehow to their exploitation?

As the interviews came in, something became glaringly apparent as we thought it might. Three of the life stories are quite positive, showing people relatively in control of their lives, while the other

three have a quite different feel.

It certainly created a tension in the magazine (and in its editor – is it right to propose a 'meal' using some ingredients that are produced exploitatively?). But the blend is quite appropriate. We need to know that there are strong, happy, successful people in the Third World, that it is not the uniformly miserable place that some images of it still suggest. But we need equally to be aware of the injustices – especially if we play a part in the drama ourselves as consumers of the end product. And having read what people like Neco in Brazil or Yolanda in the Philippines tell us of their lives, maybe we will be spurred into new or renewed action that might help them.

Creative tension? That is the idea.

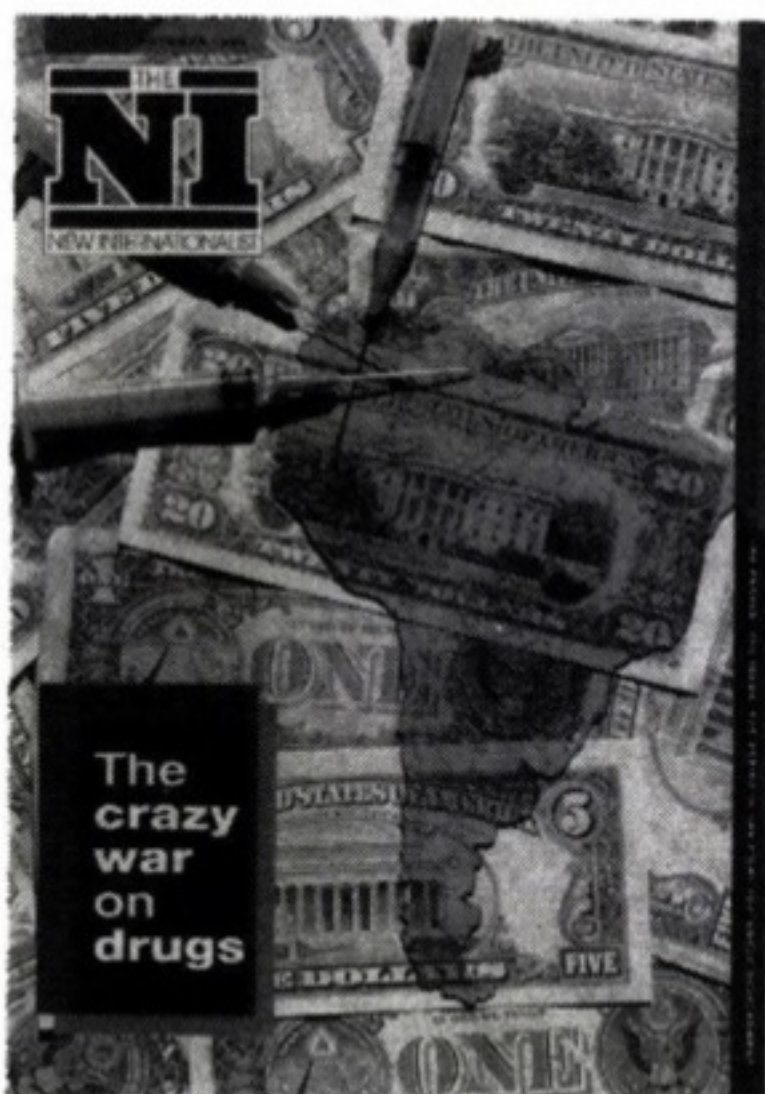


Troth Wells

Troth Wells
for the New Internationalist Co-operative

Smoke screen

So it's US imperialism and the Thatcherite 1980s which are to blame for the drugs problem (*The war on drugs* NI 224). This is not a new analysis for the NI. Housing, crime, interna-



tional debt, hunger, the burning of the Amazon rainforest ... you name the problem and I have a pretty good idea how the NI will explain it away. But what such analysis can't deliver, and what NI editor David Ransom so conspicuously avoided, was a sense of where do we go from here?

Big metropolitan powers like the US and the UK are not going to become progressive Amsterdams. Just ease up on the crackdown and how many more innocent people will be killed in the drug gangs' cross-fire? How many more kids are going to mess up their lives?

I don't have the answers, but I do expect Ransom to have a bash. Charming admissions about smoking a pipe are not enough to win me over.

Derek Johns
Brighton, UK

Tibet's tragedy

Incredible. A whole issue devoted to refugees (*The Dispossessed* NI 223) and no mention of Tibet. Occupied in 1950 by the Chinese, there are over 100,000 Tibetan refugees, most of whom left Tibet with the Dalai Lama following an uprising in 1959. They mostly live in India and Nepal where they receive little government aid due to the poverty in these countries, and survive only by their own hard work and with help from Western funds. If



The **New Internationalist** welcomes your letters. But please keep them short. They may be edited for purposes of space or clarity. Include a home telephone number if possible and send your letters to the nearest editorial office. The address is inside the front cover.

readers wish to know more they should write to:

The Tibet Society of the UK,
Olympia Bridge Quay, Russell Rd,
London W14, or Tibet Support
Group UK, 43 New Oxford St,
London WC1A 1BH.

Joanna Prescott
Bristol, UK.

Tormented Travellers

I'm sorry your issue on the Dispossessed (NI 223) had so little coverage of Travellers. Human society was all originally nomadic and Travellers are a vital link with the past, continuing a cultural tradition of adaptation and independence rare in the developed world. They also remain relatively immune to the values of consumerism as well as having strong family and community bonds.

However laws in the UK make life extremely difficult for these people. Some families have even been evicted 15 times in one day – a sobering corrective to the notion of tolerance in a society supposedly built on values like freedom and choice.

David Cannon
London, UK

Praise diversity

York Ryding's letter criticizing the divergence in NI's editorial philosophies, is probably dangerous (*Letters* NI 223). No-one can know beyond doubt that his or her ideas are more correct than others. And the earth has survived because of this divergence of views. Universal agreement tends to lead to monoculture, fanaticism and destruction. Rejoice in difference.

Ian Lanes
Brighton, UK

Red herring

Mari Marcel concludes her piece (*Letter from India* NI 223) with the following: 'I could not make the moral decision to take away a bit of meat which might mean the difference between life and death to a child. Should I?' This is divisive.

The only moral decision Mari Marcel has to make is whether or not she eats meat and feeds it her Doberman. The Tamil Nadu natives must make their own decisions. These will

Sensitive holidays

Surely your article questioning tourism's impact on Nepal (*Updates* NI 222) should have coincided with or deleted your review of two travel guides to Nepal which appeared in NI 221? Too often our choice of holiday is ill informed about its likely impact on local people. Tourism Concern's newly prepared code of practice for visitors to the Himalayas – to appear in the literature and briefing materials of many companies – will hopefully encourage sensitive and sustainable tourism in the region.

Alison Stancliffe,
Tourism Concern
London, UK

I only visited Nepal to get a break from the tourists here at home



obviously be largely based on necessity at present. But hopefully they will one day be empowered to take moral considerations into account.

Neil Basil
Barnstaple, UK

Killing fields

By including 'Civil Strife' in your statistics (*Assailed by the cyclone* NI 222), you enter a domain of ignorance. To say that Pol Pot 'genocide' killed a million Cambodians in 1975 – 1978 is guesswork: the true figure can never be known. But in early 1975 a senior US health official forecast up to a million deaths from starvation after US withdrawal, due to the aerial devastation of Cambodia's rural infrastructure.

Certainly the Khmer Rouge committed shocking atrocities. But the best researched evidence (Chomsky and Hertman) put the number actually killed at between 100,000 and 200,000 – a slaughter similar in scale to that perpetrated during the same period in East Timor following the US-backed Indonesian invasion. That disaster, incidentally, escapes mention in your statistics.

PG Haig
Wellington, Aotearoa/ New Zealand

Political prejudices

Your Endpiece of NI 222 (*Mugging the Good Samaritan*) contained one of those all-too-frequent left-wing contradictions. While berating the International Freedom Foundation (IFF) for its prejudiced campaign against the political abuse of taxpayers' money by Third World charities, the author Dexter Tiranti himself launches into a string of prejudiced statements.

The IFF is not a charity, receives no taxpayers' funds and thus is entitled to campaign for whatever it wishes – as is the NI. However while Oxfam, Christian Aid and other organizations continue to receive a subsidy from the taxpayer, they must cease their partisan political campaigns which not only break British law but also their own Trusts.

Marc Gordon, Director (UK)
International Freedom
Foundation,
London, UK

Charitable support

How gratifying to read Dexter Tiranti's bold defence of the 'political' stance of Third World charities (NI 222). It was through Oxfam's visiting work in Cambodia that the world's attention was once again focused upon the continuing tragedy which is now engulfing its people. Of course charities must try to maintain a balanced approach to aid work, yet in countries where the majority of suffering is a direct result of government corruption, greed or incompetence, their task must seem nearly impossible at times. With that in mind let us all salute charities and dig deeper into our pockets.

Jane Nicholas
Tyuryn, Wales, UK

Liberating women

The update on population (*Motivating men* NI 222) was right to argue that men should be consulted more on family planning. But women in the Third World perform a dual role as both child bearers and food producers. It is imperative that their views are sought on family planning so that smaller families will benefit them. Only this way will a decline in the population growth rate of Africa free women from the clutches of domesticity to pursue education and so help to improve equal opportunity on the continent.

Christian Adomako,
Thames Polytechnic,
London, UK

Hitler's phobia

Where is Anuradha Vittachi's evidence that 'many' Nazis were secretly homosexual? (*Our boys, our toys* NI 221)? This claim has commonly been made by people with an anti-gay axe to grind. Not all macho men are closet gays. Hitler tolerated Rohm and his handful of homosexual cohorts only as long as it suited him – 18 months. Thereafter gay men were persecuted within the party and without. No doubt a number did survive there – we are everywhere – but it had nothing to do with being Nazi.

H Young
Pukerua Bay, Aotearoa/ New Zealand

The views expressed on the letters page are not necessarily those of the NI.

L E T T E R F R O M I N D I A



For a few dollars more

Babies are being born deformed while Western drug companies bolster their profits. Mari Marcel Thekaekara reports on one lawyer's battle for justice.

BOMMI, a young tribal girl from a small village near here had a problem which millions of young girls like her have faced before. She was unmarried and pregnant – and the father of her child didn't want to marry her. After a month of agonizing, she asked a friend to get her an 'abortion drug' from the local chemist.

Ketan, the friend, can neither read nor write. But he asked the chemist for a drug to 'get rid of a pregnancy'. The chemist obliged with an Estrogen and Progesterone (EP) drug which Bommi took. Next day she was rushed to the doctor with severe stomach cramps and vomiting.

Deva and Roopa – two young doctors who are part of our team working with tribals in the Nilgris – were appalled. Abortion is frowned on by tribal society. But more than this, by taking the EP drugs Bommi could have irreparably harmed her unborn child.

The incident recalled an interview I did some years ago with Dr Vincent Pannikulangara, a lawyer fighting a mammoth battle against Indian and multinational pharmaceutical giants producing and selling banned drugs in India – especially the EP drugs which Ketan had bought so easily. The companies repeatedly procured stay orders to thwart Pannikulangara.

Finally in 1986, weary and dispirited after four seemingly futile years, he made an impassioned plea to the Supreme Court. He informed the bench that for four years he had been fighting in the highest court of the land what he considered 'a patriotic battle for justice against the criminal use of harmful drugs whose presence violates the fundamental right to life guaranteed to every citizen of India by our constitution'.

Pitted against him was the might of pharmaceutical giants that had succeeded in ensuring that the drugs remained on the market even though they endangered the lives of millions. Pannikulangara declared that he had expected the Government of India to respond in a spirit of justice and concern, but after four years he had achieved nothing. He had reached the end of his tether and was ready to step down defeated.

Moved by the sincerity of his plea, Justice RN Mishra – in a landmark judgment – criticized the Union of India, the Indian Medical Council and State Governments for their indifference to the cause of public health. In unusually strong language for a Supreme Court judge, he pointed out: 'So long as you were not aware of the harm to public health it was excusable. Thereafter it was murder.'

Pannikulangara was elated by the victory but was quick to point out that for effective implementation, women and concerned health action groups must take up the struggle to keep EP

drugs off the market.

In 1988, two years after this judgment, the Drug Action Forum Karnataka (DAF), a voluntary health vigilance group, proved the banned EP drugs were still around by procuring sales receipts from local chemists.

EP drugs were still being routinely prescribed for women's menstrual problems. For example, a



DEXTER TIRANTI

woman comes to a doctor complaining of a delayed period, anxious in case she is pregnant. The doctor prescribes EP drugs supposedly to regulate her menstruation. But if she is already pregnant this is very dangerous for the drug contains an abortion agent, not usually strong enough to induce abortion but definitely strong enough to cause irreparable damage to the fetus.

The DAF approached the State Drug Controller with their evidence and were assured that action would be taken. The Controller then issued a press release instructing chemists not to sell the drugs and people not to buy them. He also sent a circular to drug inspectors throughout the State with orders to seize the drug from chemists stocking it. Even after this, DAF volunteers bought EP drugs from three different chemists and mailed the receipts to the Drug Controller for action. But nothing seems to have happened and the drug is easy to procure.

Governments of developing countries would do well to take a leaf out of Bangladesh's brilliant National Drug Policy which ordered the withdrawal of nearly 2,000 dangerous drugs, and emphasized the manufacture of essential drugs.

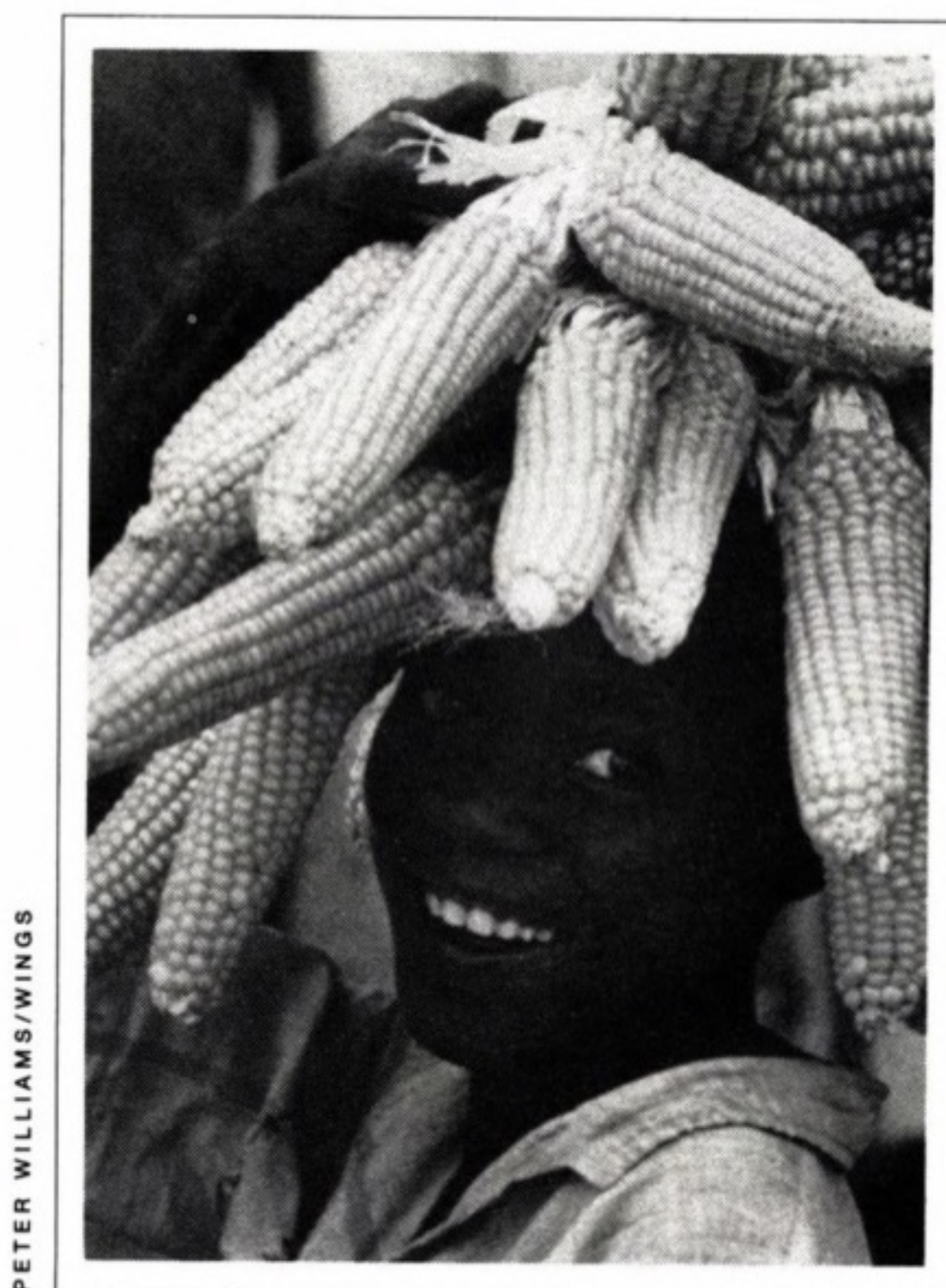
On the international front, developed nations must be pressurized to stop their multinationals from dumping killer drugs on Third World populations, in connivance with our corrupt bureaucrats and health authorities.

Last week Bommi lost her baby. But millions of young women like her will not. Their babies will be born deaf, blind, deformed or mutilated. And all so that the drug companies can make a few dollars more. ■

Mari Marcel Thekaekara has been working for the last seven years on a project she and her husband started for native people in the south Indian state of Tamil Nadu.

Raw Food

people, plants & politics



PETER WILLIAMS/WINGS

*In a world of plenty, why are so many people still going without enough to eat? **Troth Wells** discovers some of the reasons why the harvests fall short of the hope.*

'AND what do you grow on your *shamba*?' asked Martha with a smile. We had been looking at her vegetable plot in Kenya's Meru district. Behind us was an impressive array of crops, grown together — maize/corn and beans, cassava, an avocado pear tree...

Martha looked at me, waiting. It was midday and hot, with the sun directly overhead. I grew hotter as I thought how to answer her question.

'Well, I don't have a *shamba*,' I began. She looked surprised. 'I don't really grow any food, just some herbs and tomatoes.' Then the confession. 'I buy everything in a supermar... shop.' Martha laughed, amazed that I grew no food, had no need of land, and had enough money to buy what I needed. I had no control over the production of food, yet I could buy exactly what I liked.

Talking with Martha and looking at her mix of plants growing harmoniously

together under the African sky, it was easy to feel envious of her contact with the soil, with growing and with food. It seemed a long way from the weekly pilgrimage to the supermarket, pushing a metal trolley up and down the soulless aisles of this secular cathedral. What do I need today? Sweetcorn, rice, bean-curd, sugar, bananas and cocoa...

And yet, glance at the shelves and the connections are all around. Mangoes from Kenya, right there. Cocoa from Ivory



CLAUDE SAUVAGEOT

Chapati talk. In India the 'Green Revolution' – high-tech farming – has brought more food overall but many people still do not get enough to eat.

Coast. Chilean grapes. Tea from India and coffee from Colombia. The world's food is here and we can buy as we wish, the main criteria being cost and quality. But wait a minute. Over there are avocado pears from South Africa. Is it all right to buy them now? Is the boycott still on? (Can anyone I know see me?)

In this way concerns about cost and quality broaden into concerns about where food comes from and the way it is produced. We are critical consumers. We like to feel that although we are among the most privileged people in the world we're not adding too much to the world's problems by our consumption.

This might seem unimportant, given that our high income levels mean we will inevitably consume far more. On average, income in the North is \$12,510 – 18 times higher than in the South.¹ Money gives us the power to buy what food and goods we want, and it is the same for wealthy people in the Third World.

But it is a different story for the world's poor people, who have little or no income with which to buy food and little or no land on which to grow it. Every day one fifth of the people in developing countries – about 800 million people – goes hungry². Behind these impersonal figures stand the landless

families in Asia, the small farmers in Africa and the urban poor in Latin America – the children, women and men whose stomachs constrict with hunger pangs and who get sick because their bodies are weak from lack of nourishment.

Are they hungry because there is not enough food to go round? It seems not – plenty is grown. Despite a fall in global cereal stocks in the late 1980s, there is currently enough food in the world to provide the 2,600 calories or so required to keep us fit and healthy.

Up until now, we have managed overall to keep pace with increasing population largely through the technology of 'improved' or 'high response' seeds, agrochemicals and increased mechanization – a package called the Green Revolution. But the benefits have been patchy, as its story shows us.

Launched in the 1960s as the vessel of hope for the world's food problems, the revolution's new wonder seeds of wheat and rice carried the promise of bumper harvests. In the decades since, the debate has raged over whether or not this revolution has 'succeeded'.

Those in favour wave statistics of increased yields: in many areas planted to these 'modern varieties' (MVs) food

production per acre per person has doubled or tripled, outpacing population growth.³ Countries such as India and Indonesia have been transformed from basket cases into granaries. Other benefits are that more jobs have been created, and that more grain means prices can be kept low.

On the opposite side, people point to the environmental costs of growing one crop year in year out, using large doses of chemicals; to the widening gap between national production (in India for example) and satisfied stomachs in the villages; to the loss of species diversity; and to the social costs of this increased production as fields of wheat straddle the horizon, marching over land used for traditional crops and plants by poor people.

Opponents are critical too of the fact that the technical inputs favour richer farmers, since they are the ones who can stump up the cash not just for the new seeds but also for the chemicals and irrigation systems that the seeds demand.

Above all, critics attack the architects of the revolution for concentrating on the technical side – how to boost output – while ignoring how to get that larger harvest to the people who need it most. In theory, of course, the extra food is available to everyone. But in reality the

C. SANCHEZ/FAO PHOTO



Shouldering the burden in Peru. Unfair trading systems and debt mean that many Third World countries cannot break the grip of poverty.

poor still do not have the money to buy it: they watch as the loaded grain lorries rumble past them.

So here we have it, a great leap forward in the fields that has paradoxically brought both large benefits and heightened inequalities. Average yields of Asian and Latin American wheat and rice have probably increased by more in the past 25 years than in the previous 250 years. 'This has saved the lives of millions of people,' says Michael Lipton, head of the International Food Policy Research Institute's Consumption and Nutrition Program in Washington.

But on the other hand the standard of living in the poorest households are 'little or no higher than before the MVs arrived', says Lipton. India highlights the problem. Since the new strains were introduced, food output nationally has kept ahead of population growth. Yet the incidence and severity of hunger has hardly changed.³

So if more food is grown why is there still so much hunger? One reason is that even where the new grains boost food supply, not much extra demand comes from the poorest people. It is not just a question of food availability, but of having access to it – from having land to grow it on, or an income to buy it with, or some kind of transfer payments (labour for food for example). So the surplus swells the national stocks or cuts imports, but does little to put food into that hungry child's mouth.

Up until now, the benefits of the Green Revolution have largely been creamed off

by the rich and powerful to bolster their own positions. It has not led to a fairer distribution of the extra food. After all, fancy seeds alone cannot transform power structures.

Nonetheless, the new farming methods are spreading and many small farmers are involved. Today, about 40 per cent of rural populations in the Third World are cultivating mainly the modern varieties.

It is hard now to see how we could do without the Green Revolution, so can it be more effectively harnessed to serve the poor? And can traditional agriculture still play a part in delivering more food to those who need it? The answer is probably yes to both questions.

Taking traditional farming systems first, these provide much more than just food. Shrubs and trees, in addition to yielding leaves and edible roots for humans, provide browse or fodder for animals and timber for building or fuel. Animals provide draught power, milk and meat as well as dung. Stalks and other crop residues also add to the animal fodder and fuel. The mix of tree and plant heights provide shade. Crops can sustain each other by being mixed: beans nourish the soil for maize which returns the gift by providing a handsome stalk for the bean to climb up.

Some estimates suggest that, hectare for hectare, these mixed farming plots provide a richer mixture of nourishment, than the same area planted to one crop.⁴ Certainly they are kinder to the soil and to people.

It sounds too idyllic to be true. But there is every reason to pursue this approach in

countries where people still have access to farming land, as in Africa. And since peasant farmers the world over have always experimented with crop breeding, they will doubtless welcome the latest 'modern varieties', especially of staple foods such as cassava and sorghum. Small farmers can use chemical inputs judiciously to enhance nature's course rather than subverting it for ever. The important thing is that they control what they produce, and that technology serves their needs.

This is the link to the Green Revolution, which also has a part to play in reducing hunger, provided its fruits can be better distributed to the hungry. This is not just a question of trucks and fuel. It means tackling social injustice by devising, for example, effective food subsidies or job creation schemes.

But subsidies and public-employment schemes crumble if the government has no money. Most developing countries are reliant on the export of primary commodities or cash crops like coffee or cocoa. When prices of these fall, governments have to cut back on public spending – often strong-armed into it by lending institutions such as the International Monetary Fund.

During the last decade, according to the World Bank, prices for many commodities fell to their lowest levels since World War Two. They climbed back a little, but by 1989 average prices were still lower than in 1980.⁵ So a poor country like Uganda, exporting coffee, is faced with more

Out of Africa: 'cash crops' like cocoa and tea are exported to the West, leaving less land for food.



HENNING CHRISTOPH

mouths to feed and less money to pump into its economy to help its people.

This dependence on the price of a few commodities on the world market is no accident. It dates from imperial times, when colonies were used as resource bases by their industrializing rulers – as handy gardens, forests and mines, not to mention pools of cheap labour. Economic ideas about specialization and the laws of comparative advantage bolstered a Western view that Africa, for example, was best suited to grow tea and coffee while North America had wheat and corn production sewn up.

The problem with this is that it puts Ghana and Ivory Coast, for example, into the same cock pit fighting for cocoa buyers. If they both boost production, markets become glutted and prices fall. Yet if they cut production other countries will take up the slack. Only the buyers – the producers and consumers of chocolate in the rich world – end up benefitting.

This game was set in motion by the West and it is still the industrial countries that make up the rules. Southern countries are restricted from processing their own raw materials and exporting the results to the North, while the North itself complains bitterly at any sign that the South might obstruct 'free trade'. Current negotiations on the General Agreement on Trade and Tariffs (GATT), aimed at removing trade barriers, look positive for the developing countries. But in the long term it will open their markets up to the long and probing tentacles of US grain giants like Cargill and could dash their hopes of food self-reliance.

It is time for another revolution – in trade this time – and overseen by the United Nations. This would reverse the current position by insisting that industrialized countries live up to their free-trade principles while allowing the Third World some protection for its fledgling industries.

But of course there has to be the political will. The West, smug about the demise of the Eastern bloc, believes that capitalism has triumphed and that the free market is here for all. But a market is never free. It responds to economic power and not to need. The only way it can operate equitably is for purchasing power to be more widely dispersed, for consumers to be enfranchised.

Which brings us back to the supermarket. Consumers have some power. Critical consumers can make life hot even for the very biggest multinational companies. The consumers' associations in Western countries have traditionally not made it their business to complain about multinationals' treatment of their workers in the Third World. But they are linked



F. BOTTIS/FAO PHOTO

Planting promise. People have the technology, the skills and the know-how to feed the world. What's needed is the political will to ensure the harvest reaches the hungry.

through the International Organization of Consumer Unions to groups like the Consumers' Association of Penang in Malaysia, whose watchdog role is vital in raising concern about dangerous chemicals or unsavoury working conditions.

And there should soon be the chance to take consumer power further. The aid agency, Oxfam, in partnership with other European fair-trading organizations is launching a scheme which hopes to take the principles of fair trade into the supermarkets by rewarding certain products with a special mark of endorsement. The 'fair-trade mark' will guarantee to the consumer that the farming family at the other end of the production chain is getting a fair deal. The aim is to encourage companies like Dole, say, to offer a better proportion of the retail price to the producers in the Philippines. Companies are increasingly having to satisfy environmental criteria – so why should they not meet standards based on justice and humanity as well – and be penalized by the consumer if they are found wanting?

This is a better, more organized solution than simply boycotting bananas on the grounds that they probably came from an exploitative plantation like that described later in this magazine. Boycotts are a useful weapon but they should only be used when

there is an organization representative of the workers concerned which calls for such action – as in South Africa.

A 'fair-trade mark' would help make our decisions as consumers more informed and useful. But even without such a scheme we can learn more about the distant origins of the foods we buy. Let us go back to the supermarket trolley bearing sweetcorn, sugar, rice, bean-curd, cocoa and bananas. These are the six ingredients selected to make the imaginary meal that is the basis of this magazine – the menu is overleaf. They have been chosen because of what they reveal about the way food is produced – and the people who produce it.

In the following pages meet Joyce Kayaya, a maize farmer in Zambia; Neco, working on a Brazilian sugar plantation; Rahima Khatun, preparing rice for her family in Bangladesh; Mr Lau, selling soybeans in China; Ghanaian cocoa farmer Kwabena Nten; and Yolanda Martinez, who works on a banana farm in the Philippines. Just a few of the faces behind the facts on world food. ■

¹ Human Development Report 1991, UNDP. ² From figures in *The State of World Population Report 1991*, UNFPA, and *Human Development Report 1991*, UNDP. ³ *New Seeds and Poor People*, Michael Lipton with Longhurst (Unwin Hyman 1989). ⁴ *Biotechnology and the Future of World Agriculture*, Henk Hobbelink (Zed 1991). ⁵ *World Development Report 1990*, World Bank.

A WORLD MEAL



FROM 6 FOODS

Here is a 'meal' made up of the six ingredients featured in this magazine – maize/corn, sugar, soybeans, rice, bananas and cocoa.

There are maize/corn snacks to begin with and drinks (which all use sugar), followed by soya bean dishes accompanied by rice in various guises and desserts made with bananas and cocoa (chocolate).

TO BEGIN



KAO POT PING **FROM SOUTHEAST ASIA**

Charcoal-roasted corn on the cob, dipped in coconut milk

TACOS FROM CHILE

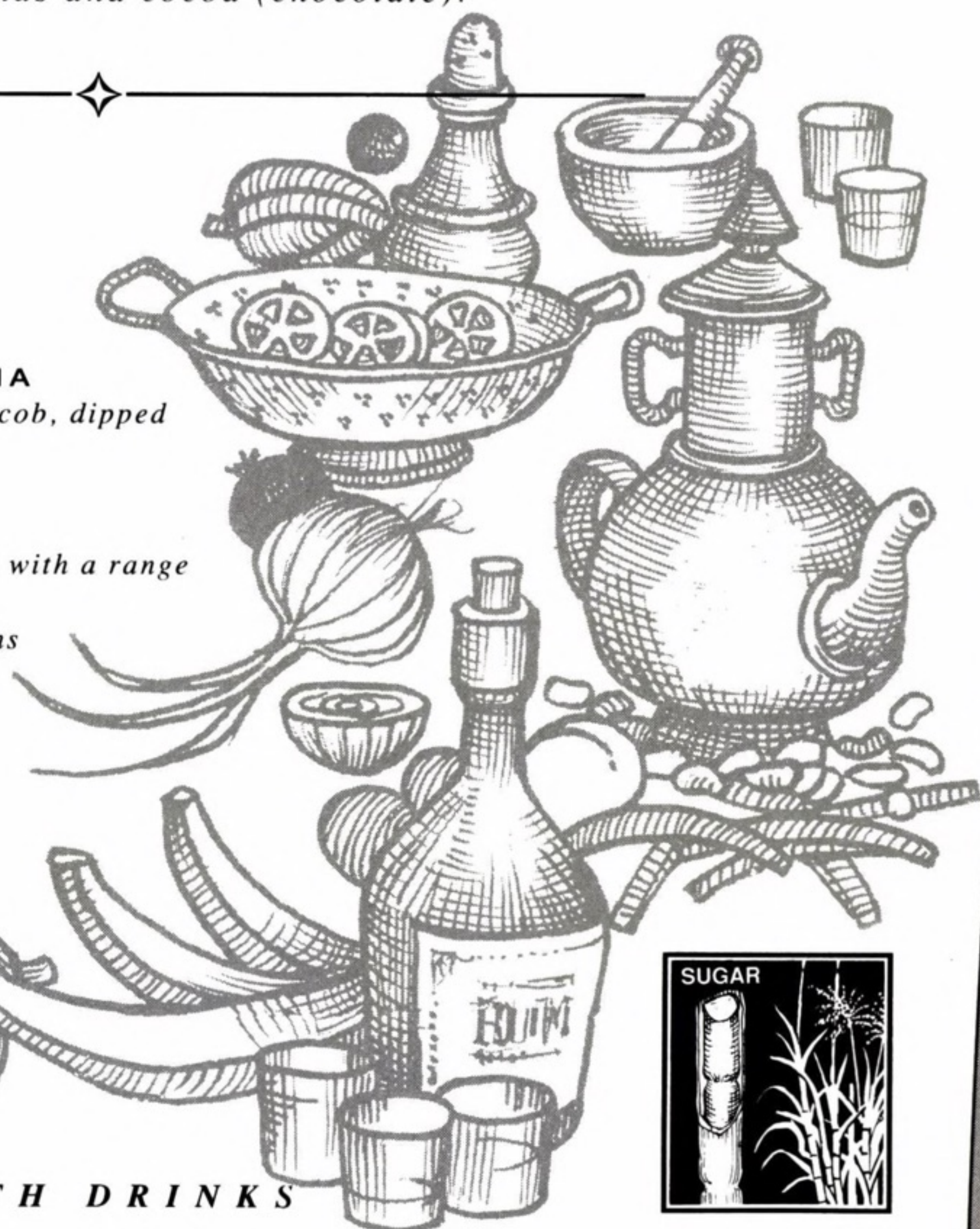
Little tortillas (corn pancakes) with a range of fillings: cheese, beans, tomatoes or peppers, and onions

CORN SOUP FROM KENYA

Creamy corn soup with milk and onions

AREPAS FROM VENEZUELA

Corn cakes, served with cream cheese or guacamole (avocado dip)



WITH DRINKS

UTYWALA FROM SOUTH AFRICA

Maize/corn beer, rich and nourishing

BANANA TODDY FROM INDIA

Sour taste and very strong

RICE WINE FROM CHINA

Tastes a little like dry sherry, usually served warm

RUM PUNCH FROM THE CARIBBEAN

White or dark rum, a touch of sugar and plenty of fresh lime juice

CHAMPURRADO FROM MEXICO

A chocolate drink made with cornstarch, chocolate and cinnamon

SOY MILK FROM EAST ASIA

Full of protein, and very refreshing

TO FOLLOW



SOYA BEANS

STIR-FRY WITH BEAN-CURD FROM CHINA

Soybean-curd, beansprouts, baby sweetcorn, snow peas, carrots, spring onions, ginger and cashew nuts, flavoured with soy sauce.

TAHU PONG FROM INDONESIA

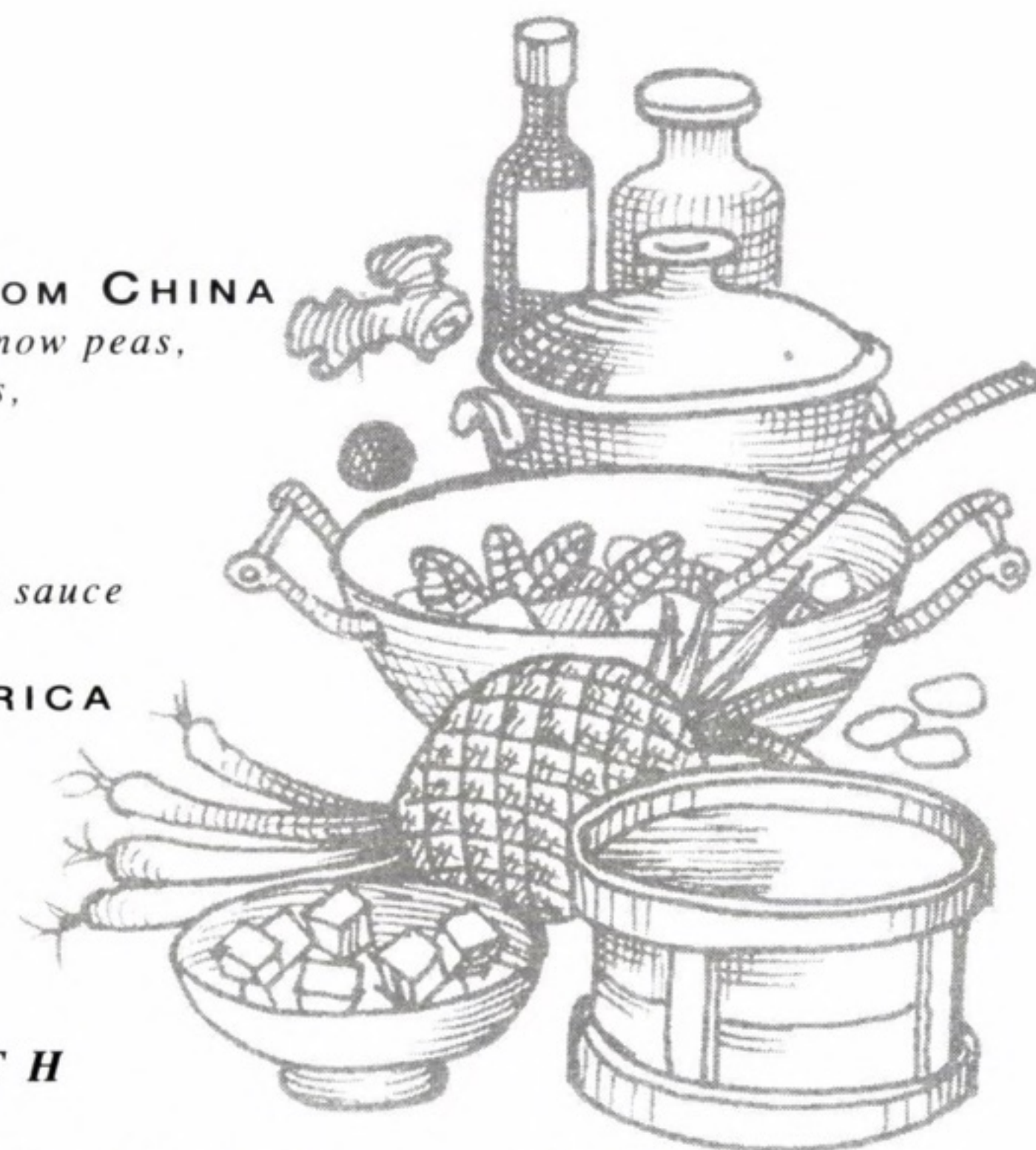
Bean-curd omelette cooked with golden peanut sauce

MATOKE WITH BEANS FROM AFRICA

Soybeans with savoury bananas (plantains)

GADO-GADO FROM MALAYSIA

Cooked vegetable salad with shredded Chinese cabbage, french beans, cucumber, bean-curd and peanut sauce



SERVED WITH

KAO PAD SUPPAROT FROM THAILAND

Fluffy rice with fresh pineapple chunks served in a pineapple shell

CHELLO RICE FROM IRAN

A mound of steamed rice sitting on gently fried potato slices

DOSAS FROM INDIA

Fine rice-flour pancakes



RICE

DESSERT



BANANAS

BANANES AU RHUM FROM HAITI

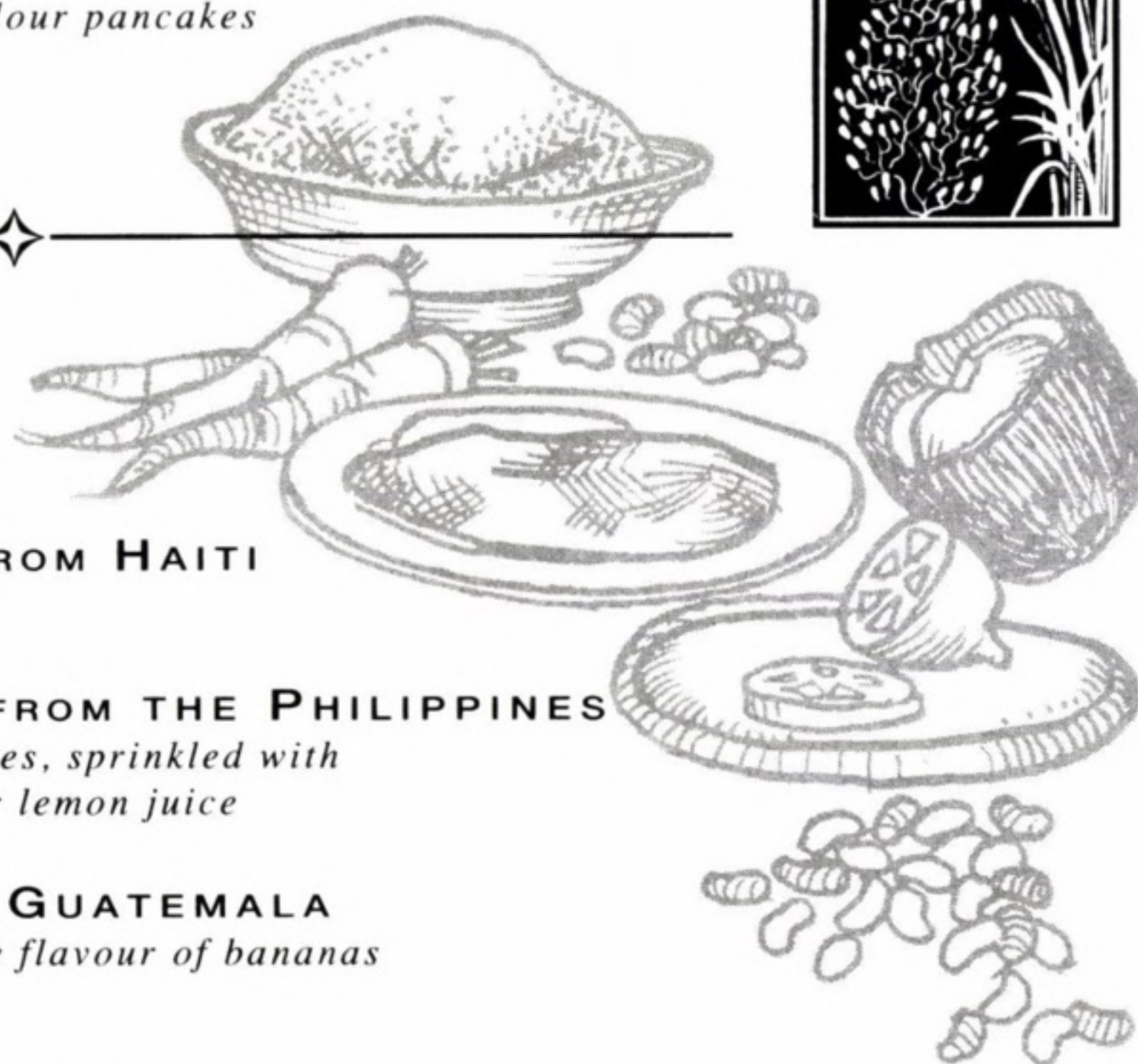
Bananas in rum

TURON DE MANILLE FROM THE PHILIPPINES

Bananas wrapped in rice pancakes, sprinkled with grated coconut and fresh lime or lemon juice

BANANA BREAD FROM GUATEMALA

Damp and rich, with the delicate flavour of bananas and a hint of cinnamon



BANANA FRITTERS - SIERRA LEONE

Mashed bananas in a light rice batter mixed with a little sugar and nutmeg

OR

CHOCOLATE CAKE

FROM THE MIDDLE EAST

Half pudding, half cake with the subtle flavour of ground almonds

CHOCOLATE GINGER LYCHEES

FROM CHINA

Whole lychees, stuffed with candied ginger, coated in chocolate sauce

CHOCOLATE MOUSSE FROM BRAZIL

Light and airy dessert, enriched with cashew nuts



COCOA

A song of the strong

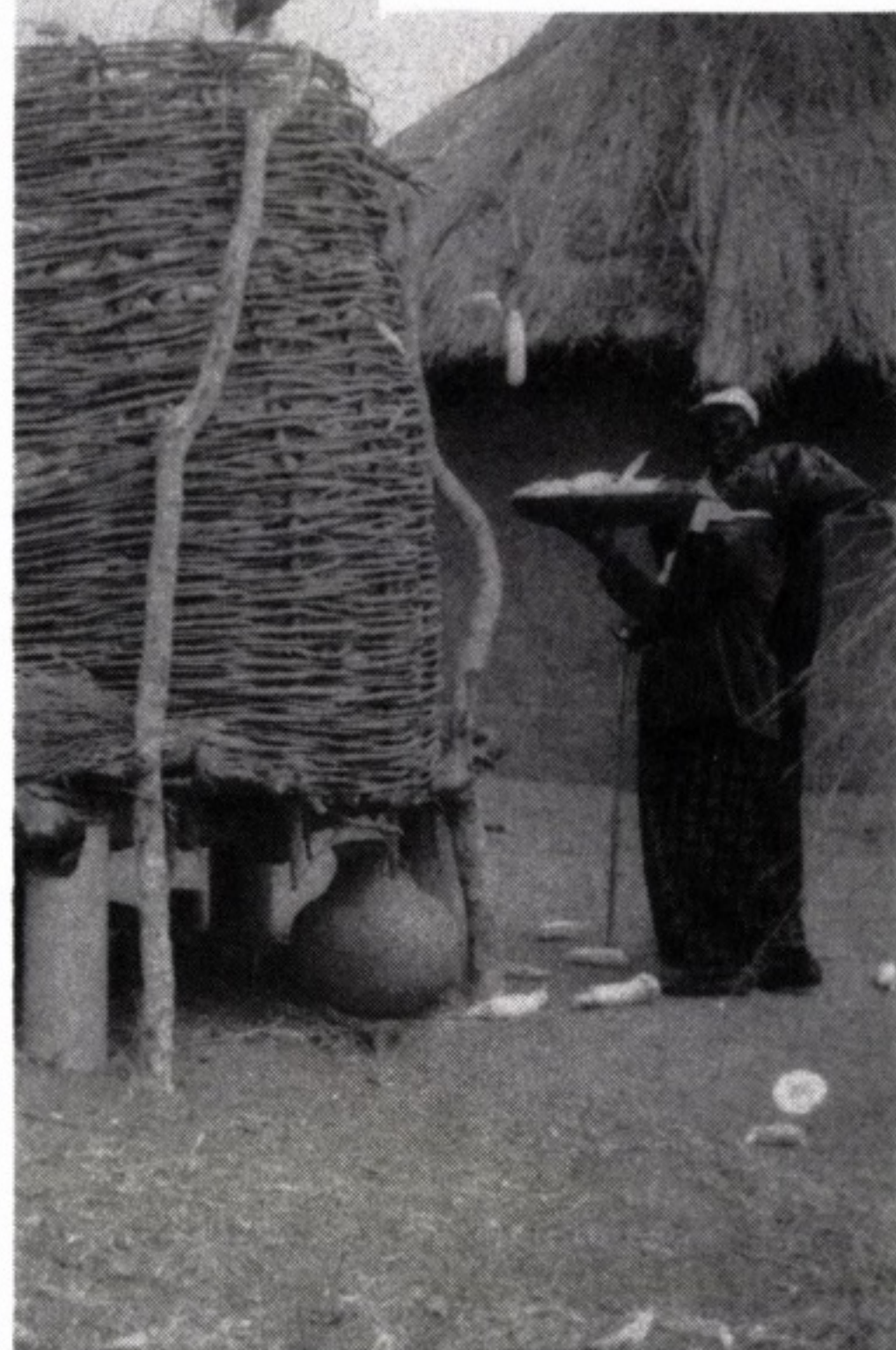


The first ingredient, maize, takes us to Zambia to meet farmer Joyce Kayaya. As she tells Mary Namakando, in her view the country's food problems have a simple cause. The harsh demands of the global market seem a world away.

PHOTOS: KILLION MAMBWE



A farmer's life. Up at five o'clock every day, Joyce Kayaya (above) grows maize for her family. Her blind husband Patson helps with drawing water (right) while son Obed hands down corn cobs from the store house (below). But Joyce has always shouldered the main responsibility for the farm.



THE day is quite warm for winter, brightening our hopes for what is in store. We are not disappointed. It is show time for local farmers at Chipapa, about 45 kilometres south of Lusaka, Zambia's capital. Joyce Kainguluka Kayaya, 50, is here exhibiting her maize. She emerges from the enclosure dressed in her Sunday best – not quite the picture of a typical Zambian farmer in her frilled white blouse and her blue skirt complemented by a floral *chitenge* (wrap).

Fully 85 per cent of Zambia's farmers work, like Joyce, on a very small scale. Yet they contribute over 60 per cent of the country's maize production. We travel back to Joyce's *nyumba* (homestead) and as we sit in the sun she tells me her story.

'I used to grow just maize mainly to feed my family,' she explains, speaking

softly in Chinyanja, the only language we have in common – Joyce's usual language is that of her southern Zambian Soli people. 'But in 1984 I decided to ask for a loan from the credit union. They gave me it and I managed to sell a hundred 90-kilogram bags – and repaid the loan.

'So I went on and in 1987 I became a contact farmer under Global 2000' (the organization run by former US President Jimmy Carter) 'to help improve my farming methods. Others come to me and learn what I have been taught.' She has diversified to make better use of the rains, growing cabbage and other vegetables as well as her maize.

Resourcefulness and planning are second nature to Mrs Kayaya. They have to be. She now has 20 hectares under cultivation but, in common with most small farmers in the country, she does not hold title deeds to her land. It is ancestral land, lying in the area of local chief Nkomeshya.

Despite Joyce's labour and that of many small farmers like her, Zambia still had to import 13,000 tonnes of maize this year from neighbouring Zimbabwe to tide it over the lean month before harvest. And the country needs at least 50,000 tonnes more between now and the next marketing season.

Zambia can ill afford to import maize. Its economy is in tatters. Like many other developing countries it has suffered from a dependence on one commodity – in this case copper, whose price has fallen over the years. The punitive oil price hikes of the 1970s made things worse, particularly for internal transport. The country now has a foreign debt of seven billion dollars which has forced it to swallow its pride and turn to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank.

But at another cost. For the stringent measures prescribed by the two institutions to breathe life into the economy included withdrawing the subsidies on maize (mealie) meal in 1986. This sparked off food riots across the country. In 1990 at least 14 people were killed in two further days of rioting as thousands of enraged Lusaka residents protested against higher mealie meal prices.

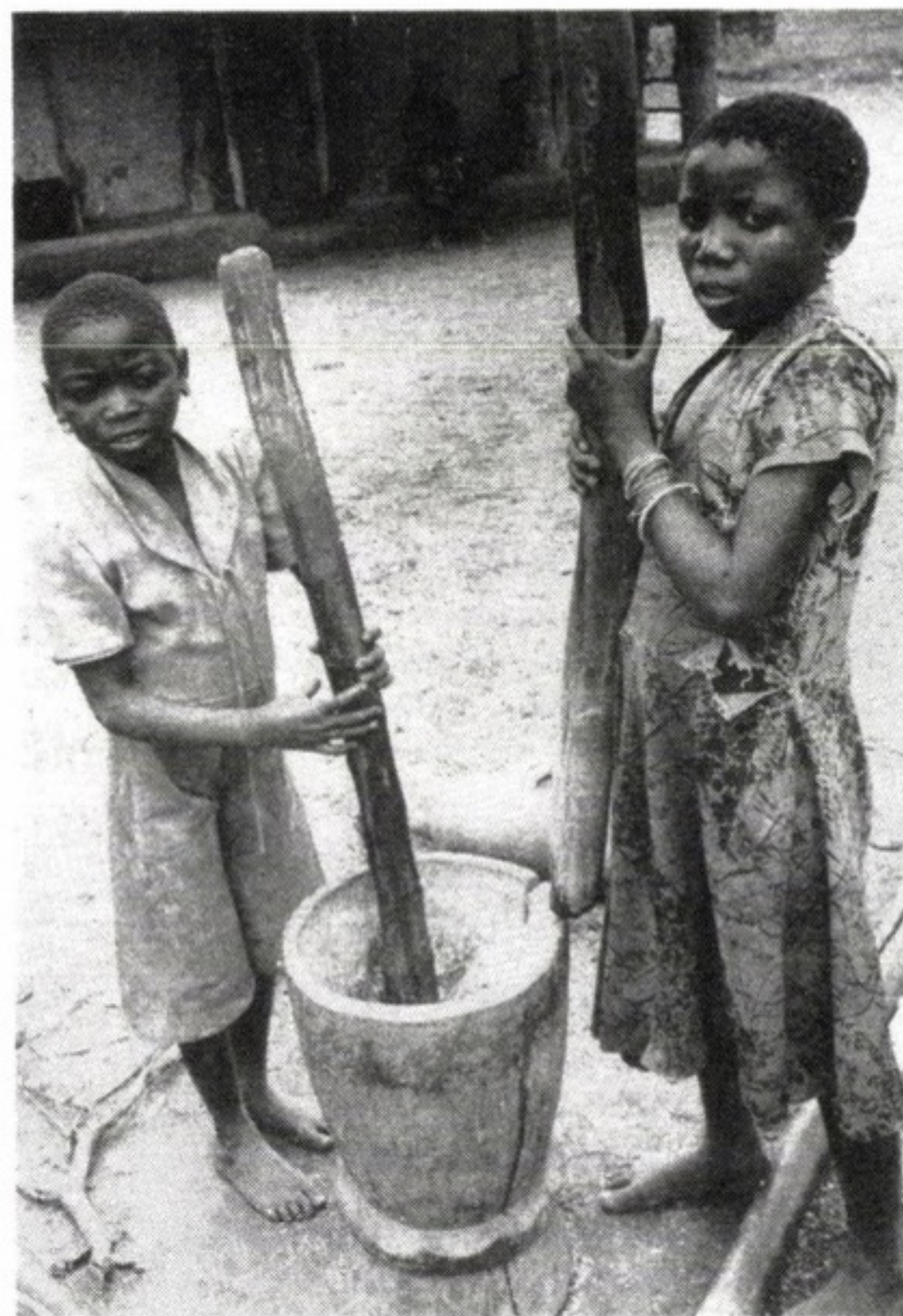
How does all this affect Joyce Kayaya, the small farmer in the countryside? Her response to the food riots emerges out of her own experience, in which hard work on the land results directly in food.

'I cannot understand how some people can be starving when they are able-bodied. I have learnt so much from sheer determination and I therefore do not understand how people can go hungry in this country. Someone somewhere is not doing their job. It is sheer laziness, no two ways about it.' And to underline her point, Joyce breaks out into song, accompanied by her hus-

band, about a *ulesi* – lazy – person who never wanted to work.

'When other people were busy cultivating their fields,' sings Joyce, 'this lazy person would climb the tree and go to sleep. Come harvest time, he would start begging from others and they would taunt him and say, "See these sweet potatoes, maize, cane and ground nuts – we will not give you any!" And the lazy person would regret his actions because he would starve.'

'The food riots we heard about in the towns were simply a result of laziness, laziness in the sense that if there are so many other people like me who produce so much



Cereal story: pounding corn to make *nshima* (porridge).

maize, why is there such a shortage that the Government has to buy from other countries?' And Joyce has hit on a question which most Zambians ask themselves.

It is indeed puzzling that each year there are the same problems of maize haulage, lack of funds to pay the truckers or no money to pay the farmers. Once the maize is sent to the depots, there is often a lack of tarpaulins to cover it so that when the rains come it rots. Then the Government is forced to scout for funds so that it can import maize – which means more debt.

Hunger has touched Joyce's own family. 'I am presently looking after a little niece whom I saved from starvation at her mother's home in another village. The little girl had a very serious case of malnutrition and would have died.

'To think there are several such cases all around Zambia is very sad indeed. We have so much land which we should use for food.' She feels strongly that people should

not go to the cities unless they have a job there and can provide for themselves. Otherwise she believes people should stay in the countryside and grow what they need to eat, as she does.

'All I know is that since 1965 I have been up at five o'clock every day, six days a week, to cultivate my fields,' she smiles.

That was a special year for Joyce. 1965 was the year after Zambia gained its independence from the British. And it was the year her husband Patson lost his independence: he went blind.

'At that time we had five children; the oldest was only seven and the youngest a baby. There was nothing for me to do except take full responsibility for cultivating our land.'

Mr Kayaya, blind as he was, made himself useful by making bricks for sale to try and help Joyce raise money. 'The bricks were used for making what we call *matina* (brick houses). And in the end we raised enough money to buy two oxen to help with the ploughing and to pay for uniforms and schoolbooks for the children.

'In those days I used to do all the farming myself. I even learned to hitch the plough to the oxen and then plough the field with my fifth child strapped on my back.

'Apart from that I would go back to the house to cook lunch for Patson and then get back to the field.' Joyce still does the cooking. The family diet consists mainly of *nshima*, a hard maize meal porridge, eaten with rainfed vegetables like rape, cabbage, okra, cassava leaves or mushrooms. Sometimes they buy beef or goat meat, or slaughter a chicken to add to the meal – they reserve their cattle for weddings and funerals.

Joyce sometimes makes a drink called *chibwantu* which is made from crushed maize or *samp* and the roots of a common tree. '*Chibwantu* is a filling drink,' she explains. 'It is a pity I have not prepared some today,' she adds with a grin, 'or you would have had some.'

Taking a sip of water instead, Joyce talks about her children and her eyes soften. She has nine children but has had 13 pregnancies. She miscarried once but has also lost three children as babies. During all those pregnancies this soft-spoken, diminutive woman never failed to provide for her family. Through the trauma of her husband's loss of sight she kept struggling to make life better for them all.

'My children are very independent. When they come and visit me they bring me a few presents and do not ask me for money. I only help them when they have a problem but I am happy that they can look after themselves and their families. I have my 25-year-old boy – Obed – who helps me with the farming.'

The Kayaya *matina* house is perched on

Selling sunshine

'START your day the Kelloggs way' goes the jingle and millions of people do just that – shaking corn flakes into bowls, pouring on milk and scattering sugar over the top. So quick and easy, so convenient in a busy world.

John and Will Kellogg started a revolution with a new process for flaking corn, patented in 1894, in Battle Creek, Michigan. John was head of a sanatorium and wanted to develop foods that were nutritious and digestible for his patients.

And while millions at the time were stirring and munching their way through grits and porridge, and others were frying and chewing through ham and eggs, devilled kidneys or kedgerree, Will Kellogg dreamed up the instant breakfast – corn flakes.

The very name suggested lightness and ease, dispelling images (and realities) of greasy fry-pans and congealed grains burning and sticking in the cooking pot.

But having a good product is not enough on its own. There is the competition to consider – like Henry D Perky's *Shredded Wheat* or, even more dangerous, another brand of corn flakes called *Post Toasties*. However Will Kellogg had some slick advertising ideas up his sleeve.

He realised the importance of the package itself as an advertising vehicle and offered prize contests and cut-out masks on the box itself. He used sex to sell, with the corn flakes girl – 'Sweetheart of the corn' – smiling as she embraced a corn stalk. At the same time he

managed to purvey the image of corn flakes as wholesome and pure and therefore entirely suitable for families and children.

Clever gifts were aimed at youngsters, such as the famous submarines and divers that you filled with bicarbonate of soda and lowered into a jar of water. In a few seconds, fingers crossed, the little aquatic toy rose to the surface in a wallow of bubbles. Who could resist?

Instant breakfast cereals soared in popularity especially after the Second World War. As more women went out to work, or stopped cooking breakfast, and people turned away from grease-laden fried meals for health reasons the way was open for the Sunshine Breakfast.

Corn (otherwise known as maize) is the only major food grain which originated in the Americas. Cultivated since earliest times in the Andes and in Central America it is still the main food for the native people of the continent, cooked up into *tortillas* or *succotash*. Corn grows in a range of colours including the blue corn favoured for its hardness by the Hopi Indians of the US. 'Corn is like our mother,' they say. 'Blue corn is like our compass – wherever it grows we can go.'

The US is the leading producer of the cereal that has been transplanted so successfully around the world. In much of Africa's countryside maize meal is the staple food, while in the towns and cities you can be sure to find packets of corn flakes – and maybe even a few plastic submarines.



SOURCE: FOOD GLORIOUS FOOD

a hill and overlooks their large maize field, brown and dry now after the harvest. A few cows stray across, foraging for mealie cobs and stalks to eat. The Kayayas have a small orchard of pear, peach, mango and mulberry trees which provide just enough fruit for the family. They hope they will one day be able to build a pump so as to grow vegetables on a commercial basis.

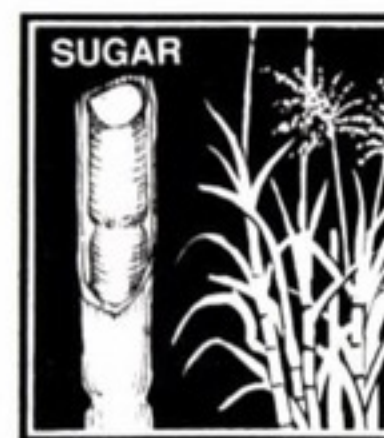
'I really don't have any complaints,' says Joyce. 'I love my smallholding and thank God for what he has given me.'

This shy but formidable woman is a source of inspiration to farmers in her area. It is unfortunate that all their efforts are not

rewarded by efficient distribution of maize.

Low copper prices, high oil costs, disabling debt repayments and the cost of caring for refugees from Mozambique and South Africa – all have squeezed Zambia's economy. But its people are, like Joyce, much more likely to pin the blame squarely on bureaucratic inefficiency. Wherever the responsibility lies, unless something changes the country will have to continue importing maize. Perhaps Joyce could sing a new song about that. ■

Mary Namakando is a senior features reporter with *The Times of Zambia* in Lusaka.



Bitter, bitter sweet

Cane sugar was transplanted into South American soil from South-East Asia, and people were uprooted from Africa to tend it. Slavery may have ended but, as Manuel José Santana tells Alex Shankland in Brazil, sugar-cane workers remain among the most exploited people on this earth.

MANUEL José Santana, known as 'Neco', is a brave man. Sitting bare-chested in the front of his house, he looks out over the small reservoir nearby and tells how he stood up to the *pistoleiro* (hired gun) sent by the boss to stop the estate workers fishing.

'With our miserable wages, we have to fish to get enough to eat. So when the *pistoleiro* came and tried to confiscate the fishing rod from one of my kids, I really gave him a piece of my mind. I told him that the boss had no right to stop us, that it wasn't him who made the reservoir, it was here before he ever arrived.'

Insisting on the right to fish may not sound like revolutionary subversion, but people have been killed for less on the sugar estates of Pernambuco in north-east Brazil.

In the streets of the nearby town, Vitória, and in the clusters of tied cottages on the estates, the faces are prematurely aged and the bodies permanently stooped under the weight of hunger and overwork.



SEBASTIAO SALGADO/MAGNUM

The grim reaper. No food in history has had more terrible implications for the people who harvest it than sugar; and the tradition continues on the plantations of Brazil.

They bear witness to the power of an unjust system to create misery out of natural plenty – and all in the cause of satisfying the world's craving for sweetness.

The sugar-cane area is known as the *Zona da Mata* after the great tropical forest, the *Mata Atlântica*, which once covered it. In the seventeenth century the first sugar barons started to clear the forest with the slave labour of the Tupi Indians whose hunting-ground it had been. Deforestation continues today. The job is nearly complete; the cane fields now cover almost everything.

'When I was a boy there was still a lot of forest,' Neco remembers. He has lived and worked at Campo Alegre ('Happy Field') for 33 of his 45 years.

'Now they've wiped it all out, covered it with cane, but in the forest there used to be a lot of game.' He reels off names of animals that once boosted workers' protein intake, and his eyes mist over as he remembers how delicious *tatu* (armadillo) used to taste.

'Nowadays there aren't even any fish in the rivers, but my father told me that when he was a young man he could catch enough fish in two weeks to pay off all his debts at the *barracão*' (the estate store which sells basic goods at extortionate prices).

Today, even plump and tasty *pilapes* fish

from the reservoir in front of Neco's house are getting hard to come by; some time ago they began to turn up dead on the shore. The fact that a stream flowing into the reservoir was used to wash out barrels of herbicide may have something to do with it.

In the absence of fish, the family's diet is simple and repetitious: *farinha* (the ubiquitous manioc or cassava flour) and *charque*, dried strips of meat of dubious origin – usually horsemeat. Many people here suffer from intestinal desiccation and haemorrhoids as a result of eating almost nothing but *farinha*. But the most common 'disease' of all among the plantation workers, responsible for 95 per cent of hospital admissions, is the one that should be easiest to cure in this fertile land – hunger.

Neco confirms this. 'A worker I knew just dropped down in a dead faint. When they got him to hospital all they could find wrong was that he hadn't eaten for days. But then what do you expect? My wages can only buy food to last us up to Thursday of each week, and there are families where come Wednesday there's nothing left.'

He is better off than some, because the Campo Alegre estate – unlike many others – allows workers to plant their own crops. Neco has banana, orange, breadfruit, jack-

fruit and mango trees around his house, and about half a hectare of ground to plant manioc, from which he makes his own *farinha*.

Neco's wages amount to 4,000 cruzeiros (\$11) per week. If he goes by bus into Vitória in search of cheaper goods than those at the *barracão* (estate shop), he will spend 400 cruzeiros, a tenth of his salary, just on the fare. In the market in town, a kilo of the worst-quality *charque* is 800, the cheapest rice is 150 a kilo, beans are 350 a kilo... and he even has to fork out 125 cruzeiros for a kilo of sugar produced from the cane he has planted, tended and cut.

Brazilians, like Westerners, are notorious for their addiction to sugar. Neco's eyes light up as he lists the sugary delights of the local cuisine. '*Rapadura, cocada, bola...* I really love sweet things – but then doesn't everybody?' He makes a face as he tries to imagine how anyone could possibly enjoy drinking coffee without sugar.

There is nothing sweet, however, about the raw cane spirit which looms large in the lives of the estate workers. Known variously as *aguardente, pinga* or *cachaça*, it is solace for exploited Brazilian workers from the sugar plantations of the north-east to the rubber forests of the Amazon to the building sites of São Paulo.

Neco himself says he no longer drinks *aguardente*, that he's getting too old for it. 'Ah, but when I used to drink, at Carnival time, then you'd see a bottle go down in four gulps!' It is common for workers to drink a whole bottle on Saturday and another on Sunday. They buy it from the *barracão*, where a bottle costs 250 cruzeiros (70 cents).

Aguaardente is almost the only escape for Campo Alegre workers. Their houses have no electricity, so they have no access to that other great Brazilian addiction, television. 'At night, TV for me is listening to the frogs croaking in the reservoir,' says Neco.

Nowadays, alcohol is the main product of the cane from Campo Alegre – *aguardente* for people and fuel alcohol (ethanol) for cars. The local sugar refinery, like many others, has been scaling down its output. The subsidies for ethanol production available under the Brazilian government's alternative fuel programme are tempting, as is the chance to escape the vagaries of the sugar export market.

But it is not only what cane is processed into that is changing. The way it is grown is also being transformed – to the cost of Neco and his fellow workers. Through profligacy and corruption, and through the Government's mishandling of the subsidy programme, refinery owners have sunk deep into debt. And although a federal bailout has been authorised by President Collor (who is from a north-eastern sugar-growing state, Alagoas), the owners are

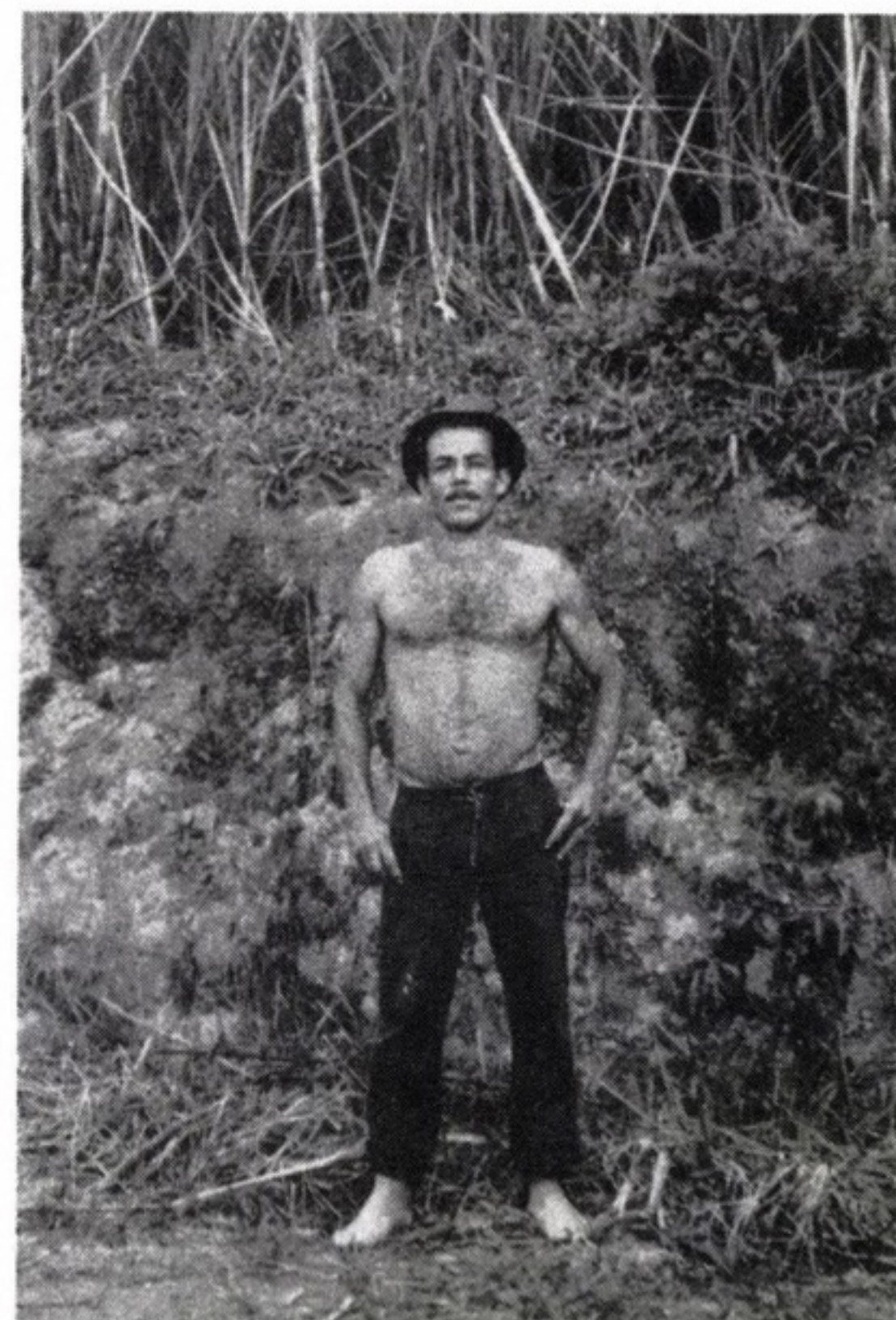
looking to cut costs. Despite the starvation wages paid on the estates, labour is now deemed too expensive and mechanization is under way.

Neco describes the cycle of work in the cane fields, which he learnt with his father but which will not be the same for his children. 'First, you clear away the brush, then you take your hoe and dig out the holes for sowing. You cut the pieces of seed-cane, sow them, put down fertilizer and cover them with earth. Ninety days later you have to clear out the brush that has grown back, and after a year the cane's ready for cutting.

'You cut it with the sickle, stack up and tie the bundles and carry them to the truck that will take them to the refinery. Then you burn off the stubble. Without the fertilizer you get feeble cane and the most you'll get out of it is three harvests. But if the cane's treated well there'll be much more. See the cane over on that hill?' he says, pointing, 'Well, that was planted in 1978. For 13 years it's been harvested, and each time it's grown back.'

At harvest time the estate workers are paid by the volume of work they do, rather than a fixed wage. It is now that they can boost their income – but it is here that mechanization has begun to make its impact.

'Those machines that collect up the bundles of cane can do the work of a hundred men in a day,' Neco says, shifting uneasily on his seat at the thought. 'The *cambiteiros* – the men who used to load the bundles onto their donkeys and take them to the



ALEX SHANKLAND

Neco's dream is to have what his grandfather had – a little land to call his own.

refinery – they have gone. So have the men who used to gather and tie up the bundles.'

September, harvest month, is traditionally the time when the estate workers strike for better pay. But the dwindling of jobs on the plantations has led to a growth in the numbers of people living on the fringes of the rural towns. Desperate for work, these

Samson, the lion and a swarm of bees

WHY do Tate and Lyle syrup tins carry a picture of a lion with bees? Because bees mean honey. A biblical story in which Samson ate honey from bees nesting in a dead lion was used by the sugar firm to link their sugar-syrup with honey. For before cane sugar, honey was the world's main sweetener.

But gathering honey – from wild bees – was a painstaking (and often painful) process. Regular bee-keeping was not common, except in some religious institutions where they made beeswax candles and sold honey. In Europe, this production fell in the sixteenth century after the Reformation and dissolution of the bee-keeping honey-producing monasteries.

Sugar cane from Southeast Asia spread to China, India and the Arab empire. When it reached Europe in the thirteenth century it already had a bitter history, with the first recorded sugar plantation revolt in the ninth century, among East African slaves on Arab plantations in Iraq.

This slavery was a taste of things to come. The Portuguese took sugar cane to north-east Brazil in the 1520s and led the way in transporting slaves from Africa to work the canefields.

At first, 'white gold' was an expensive

luxury in Europe. Then came the new beverages of coffee, chocolate and tea which married happily with it and boosted the consumption of all of them. After 1700 as tea-drinking became increasingly popular, yet



more sugar was stirred into cups, mugs and glasses. The temperance movement partly fuelled this rise as it attempted to combat the devastating effects of alcohol among poor people. In trying to obliterate one addictive

substance it inadvertently substituted another.

With the 1870s development of jams, bread and jam with tea and sugar became staple fare for millions. This cheap 'food' kept labourers and their families alive and working, dulling hunger pangs but giving little nutrition.

Why is sugar so seductive? It seems humans have a natural desire for sweetness, in common with other mammals. Perhaps this evolved as a survival mechanism enabling us to distinguish the ripest fruits and berries.

Sugar (sucrose) is different from naturally occurring sweeteners. Glucose (from honey), lactose (from mammalian milk) and fructose (from fruit) still require some work by our digestive system before being absorbed.

Not so sucrose. It has already been 'digested' by the refining process, so it goes straight into the blood stream powering a surge of energy. The digestive system then switches off, failing to absorb essential foods. Consumption of sugar becomes ever more addictive because the addict's blood sugar level rises and falls very rapidly, producing a feast-famine swing and a craving for more.

Today we mostly consume sugar as processed foods, soft drinks and alcohol. By the 1980s the UK was using 80 lbs per head each year and the US 126 lbs.

people can be brought in by the bosses at piece-rates that amount to virtually nothing.

Many of these rootless seasonal workers, the *bóias frias*, are women who were thrown out of their plantation jobs after 1988 when Brazil's new Constitution established rights such as paid maternity leave. Ironically this made them 'too expensive' in the eyes of the estate owners.

Reduced to piece-workers and accessories of men, the lot of the plantation's women is not easy. They complain of constant abuse and violence. Neco himself is no exception to the *machista* rule; his two most recent wives left him after he beat them for alleged adultery.

Neco has seven children between the ages of 3 and 21. Teenage pregnancy is almost the rule. On the sugar estates children mostly have to take care of themselves. They become part of the workforce at an early age; often it is they who spray on the pesticides without the benefit of any protective equipment.

One of Neco's sons has already left Campo Alegre in search of a job in town. Relatives have migrated to Recife or São Paulo, the industrial metropolis 2,000 kilometres to the South. Others will follow, though Neco himself plans to stay. 'My father was born and died on the cane fields; his father before him planted cane too, but he had his own piece of land.'

Neco's dream is to have what his grandfather had – a little land to call his own. 'Then I wouldn't be living as a hireling, working sickle in hand to produce more profit for the boss. I'd plant plantains, bananas and sweet potatoes. Oh yes, that would be better than going out with my hoe at dawn every day for six days to earn a salary that's all gone by the time I've bought four things in the market.'

Neco's father told him about slavery. 'He said there was a time when people worked in exchange for food, when one boss could buy a good worker from another boss, which was wrong, because it's animals that you can buy and sell – a worker has to be a free man.'

His father did not tell him, however, about the African ancestors who have left their mark in the classic 'Brazilian mixture' of Neco's features. Little more than a century ago the docks at Recife were still witnessing the arrival of ships bringing slaves from Africa to work the sugar plantations.

'Slavery hasn't ended here in the cane fields. Earning this miserable salary, we're condemned to the worst slavery of all – we are enslaved by hunger.'

Alex Shankland is a journalist and activist based in São Paulo. He would like to thank for their help: Rosemary Nery of FITPAS in Pernambuco; Peter Williams of Oxfam Recife; Severino and José Carlos; and Socorro of the Centro das Mulheres.

The control of girls



JØRGEN SCHYTT

From storing seeds to serving dinner, Rahima Khatun's work with rice betrays her inferior status as a woman. Shahidul Alam visits her home in rural Bangladesh.

THE winding track leads to a clearing where four cows and a calf are munching contentedly at their feeding troughs. It is the second week of June, the first month of the rainy season, and the air is sweet and humid with the smell of jackfruit.

For Rahima Khatun it is a quiet period. The frenzy of work that accompanies harvesting time for either rice or jute, the two crops the family cultivate, is pleasantly several months away. Yet her work still starts well before sunrise. She has already swept the mud floors and the courtyard, fed the children and the animals, spread out the cow dung to dry and washed up.

'There is no end to a woman's work,' she smiles, 'We could work all day, even all night and we'd still not finish.'

Rahima was married 12 years ago when she was about 15. She and her husband, Yar Hussain, have two sons and a daughter, Shumi, who is five. Rahima is dressed in a plain cotton *shari* with an ornate border and wears a small *nakphul* (literally, a nose flower) and silver earrings. The soles of her green flip-flops are thin with use.

Behind her is the bamboo partition which divides the house into two rooms, one for Rahima and her family, the other for her father-in-law, who owns the homestead. The thatched house has mud floors and outer walls made of tin. At the other end of the courtyard is a tubewell and a jackfruit tree laden with hoary fruit. Off to the side is a room for storing rice – and for steeping it, one of Rahima's own duties.

'Rice has been cultivated since the cre-



'We shall have to do this work all our lives, we women' – Rahima Khatun, with her daughter Shumi.

ation of humanity,' she says. 'Our elders say it used to be easier to grow in the olden days because you didn't need fertilizers and you didn't get sores (from chemicals) if you walked through the wet rice fields. All you had to do was to plant the seeds.

'Even though women do not cultivate

the rice,' she goes on, 'there is always a lot to do. Men don't always appreciate the work that women do.

'Sometimes my husband asks me what I do all day. And if he asks me to do something extra I'll have to do that too. At this time of year I can sit and talk, but I

couldn't if it was harvesting time.'

During harvest, her father-in-law and her husband cut the rice. But everything that happens thereafter is the responsibility of women: preparing the earth for threshing by covering it with mud and cow dung; hand threshing; drying the straw for cattle food; winnowing; parboiling, steeping and drying the rice for storage and then milling to remove the husk. And they are responsible for safe storage, especially of the seed stock.

'We shall have to do this work all our lives, we women. We don't have help at home. Still, the men can't make it without us and they know it really.

'Today I protested, and said if my husband didn't get the rice husked in the large mill in Kamalpur I wouldn't cook. It is expensive to go to the mill of course, and you have to think of saving costs, but I am just one person, so I can only do so much with the *dheki* (hand mill). If there are two people it doesn't take so long to husk rice – if you start at six in the morning you can finish a fair portion by nine.

'After that it doesn't take long to cook. We eat rice and *dal* (pulses) and whatever vegetables we have – egg plants (aubergine) and cabbage. This year, though, we have grown very little in the yard and we will need to buy some vegetables. The men were angry about that.

'We usually also sell some rice. At the moment it fetches 250 taka (\$7) per *maund* (about 40 kilos) and it will go up to 320 taka (\$9) per *maund* by November or December. If we wait for a month or so the

Shotguns and weddings

PINCHING plants and growing them in your own backyard is not new – the British smuggled young rubber trees out of Brazil and cultivated them in Kew Gardens before transplanting them fruitfully and lucratively to plantations in Malaysia.

And sometimes it wasn't just the botanists who did the dirty work. As the first US Ambassador to Europe, Thomas Jefferson was naturally keen to hasten his country's reconstruction after the Revolution. And he was particularly anxious about the ravaged rice fields of the Carolinas, despoiled by the British so that not even seed rice was left.

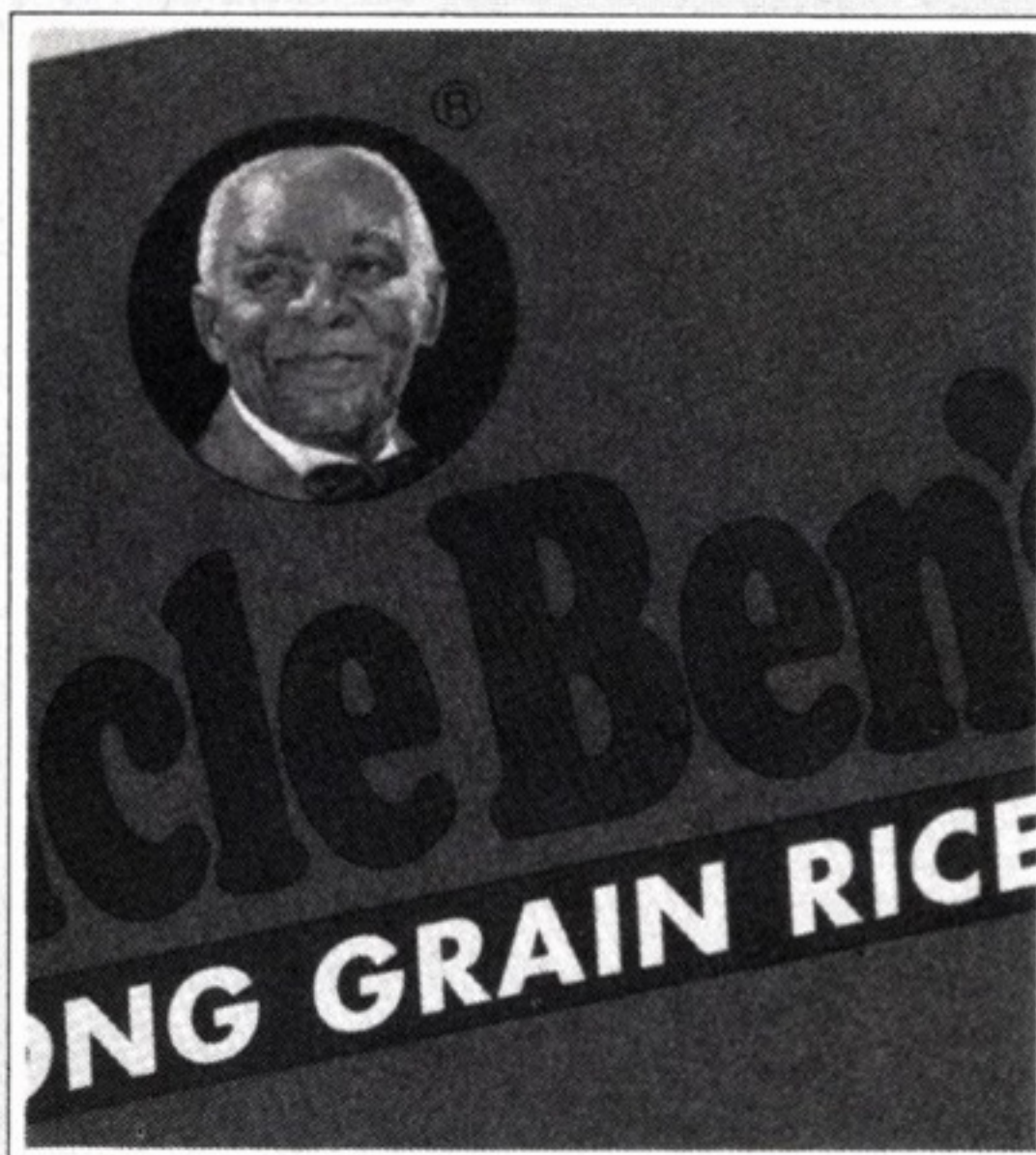
On a visit to Italy in 1787, Jefferson noted with envy the rich rice fields of Piedmont. Turning a blind eye to Italian law, he made off with a few sacks of grain, breaking the Italian monopoly and revitalizing US agriculture.

If there was an element of arrogance in his behaviour, this is not altogether surprising. In the US, rice cultivation had been built on some of the worst character traits with the use of African slaves as labour.

The philosopher Nietzsche's prejudice led him to suggest there was a link between rice-eating and opium addiction while French gourmet Brillat-Savarin warned that eating rice made people soft and cowardly as he

maintained the Indians were.

Perhaps because of these prejudices, in the West rice was treated as food for infants



or invalids. Until the late nineteenth century few cookery books carried anything other than dessert recipes for rice.

But other people recognized the value of

a food that not only sustains over one and a half billion people today, but also nourishes their sophisticated cultures. The eighteenth-century philosopher Montesquieu, for example, noted that rice growing induces hard work and co-operative virtues.

Certainly wet-rice cultivation requires hard work – the heavy labour of constructing fields, terraces and irrigation systems on the one hand; and on the other bending all day to transplant seedlings and weed in the waterlogged earth, all the time avoiding leeches and snakes.

Culturally too, rice is important in the traditions and thinking of the countries where it has been grown for centuries. Almost universally it represents fecundity, and in some Hindu marriage ceremonies the couple is showered with rice grains – a custom that spread to the West in the form of confetti.

Rice is increasingly popular in the West although it's often eaten as a breakfast cereal. *Puffed Rice* burst onto the US market early this century with the slogan 'Shot from Guns' – alluding to the way the rice grains had been exploded to make them expand. And at the New York World's Fair in 1965 a wife-and-husband circus team were shot out of a cannon to give the *Puffed Rice* publicity a bang.

price will go up by another 10 to 20 taka. Of course the traders make a profit. We make a profit, they make a profit: that is how we all live.'

The traders come to the house to buy rice, and her father-in-law also takes some to the market. They also sell at wholesale rate to poorer people in the village.

Rahima does not go to the market herself. She is scared of walking around on her own and does not even go to visit her father's house unescorted. 'We were brought up like this, never allowed to go anywhere. It wasn't considered proper. Those who are qualified (city women) can go. It is not right for village women to wander around.'

'Besides, going to the market is a man's job. Men won't do our jobs. Some women do work in the fields and dig earth but they are poor people. I wouldn't want to do it. I wouldn't be caught dead digging earth.'

Although Rahima does not go to the fields herself she knows all about rice. 'There are many types of rice, almost as many as names as there are names of people. We grow mainly *Irri* (a high-yielding hybrid type) and *Paijam*, *Aush* and *Aman* (local varieties),' she says, pointing to the containers of seed grains.

Rahima thinks about what rice means to her – aside from hard work. 'Rice is everything – whether we sell it or save it. From rice powder we make cakes, puffed rice, flattened rice, semolina. Rice water is used for starching clothes and feeding cattle. If anyone is sick then we sell rice for ready cash (to buy medicines).'

Rahima doesn't want her children to work on the land. She would like her daughter Shumi to have some schooling, something she missed herself. But she is conservative – perhaps reflecting male attitudes – about the effects of education on girls, and doesn't think her daughter should be as well educated as her sons.

'Primary school is enough – you cannot control girls if they learn too much.' On the other hand, she doesn't want Shumi to be married off too young. 'But marriage is a matter of luck. If a good offer came along we couldn't say no, could we? Daughters aren't things you can keep at home.'

Attitudes are, however, changing in other respects. For instance, she and her husband do not want more children, and have some trouble coping with the ones that they have. 'The more heads the more worries that's what we'll tell our children. My parents didn't understand. My father says God gave and he will provide.'

She feels quite fortunate. Her father-in-law is good to her. She apparently has few yearnings. While she knows women like her work harder than men, she does not openly question gender roles or the power relationships between men and women.



JORGEN SCHYTT

Hot and steamy: parboiling rice boosts its nutritional content and makes it store longer.

She accepts her lot, as she does when she talks about money: 'We women never handle money ourselves, it's true. If the men notice, then they may buy something we need, or else we ask.'

Hussain, her husband, does not interfere with the children's education and she is pretty much in charge of the home. But her own clear notions about how much food is due to each member of the family say a great deal about her own status.

'You feed each person as is appropriate. Obviously my father-in-law gets most, then

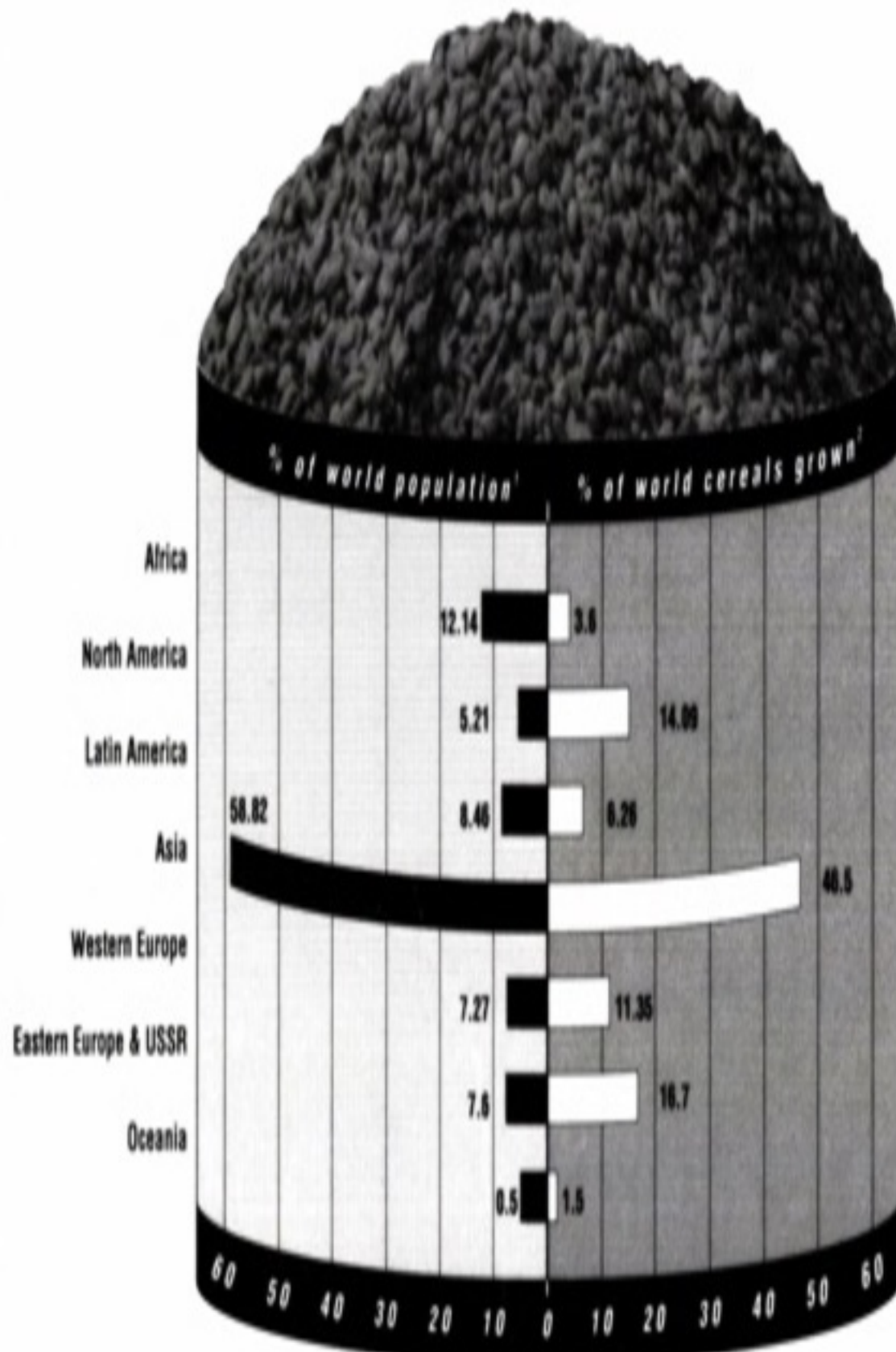
my husband, and then my daughter because she is the youngest,' she says, smiling at Shumi. 'It doesn't matter if there is none left for me. But my husband and father-in-law keep some for me and ask if I have enough.'

Given this kind of dependence on male good will, something Rahima says that might seem trite in other circumstances takes on a whole new meaning: 'It is difficult to get by,' she says, 'if there is no love in the family.'

Shahidul Alam is a writer and photographer with Drik Third World Picture Library in Dhaka.

WHAT WE GROW

Cereal grains such as rice, wheat and maize are staple foods for the world's people. Each region's share of world grain production is out of proportion to its share of the world's population.



There is more than enough food grown in the world to go round. But the rich world both produces and consumes far more than it needs, while many in the developing world still go hungry.



Too much for health

Every year around 2.5 million people in the rich world die from heart disease and illnesses associated with obesity.⁶

Countries with highest daily calorie supply per head, 1988.

1. Greece 3,699
1. Ireland 3,699
3. US 3,666
4. Bulgaria 3,614
5. Hungary 3,601
6. Denmark 3,577
7. Italy 3,566
8. Czechoslovakia 3,564
9. United Arab Emirates 3,552
10. Switzerland 3,547

Not enough for life

Every day about 40,000 children die from malnutrition and disease.⁴

Countries with lowest daily calorie supply per head, 1988.⁵

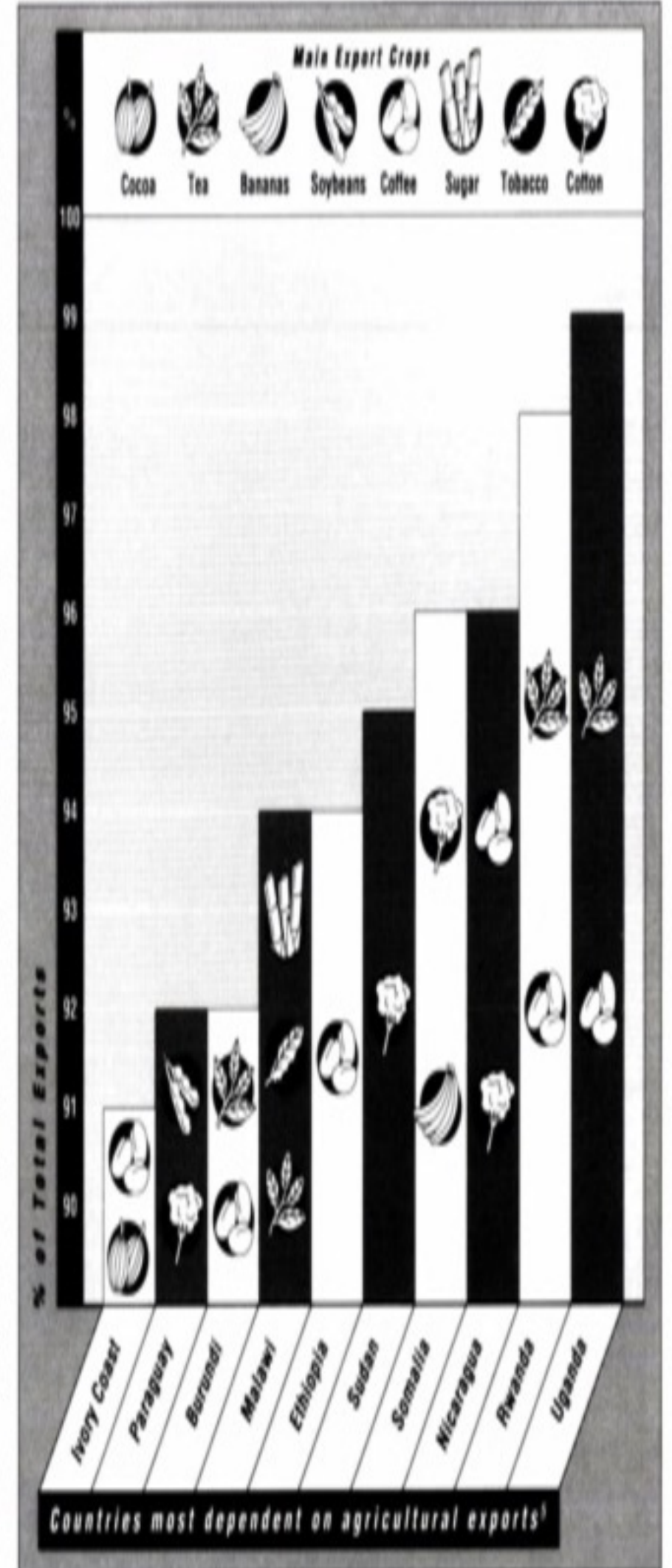
1. Mozambique 1,632
2. Ethiopia 1,658
3. Somalia 1,736
4. Rwanda 1,786
5. Sierra Leone 1,806
6. Chad 1,852
7. Haiti 1,911
8. Bangladesh 1,925
9. Kenya 1,973
10. Central Af. Rep. 1,980
14. Aotearoa/New Zealand 3,459
16. Canada 3,447
21. Australia 3,322
24. UK 3,252

WHAT WE EAT

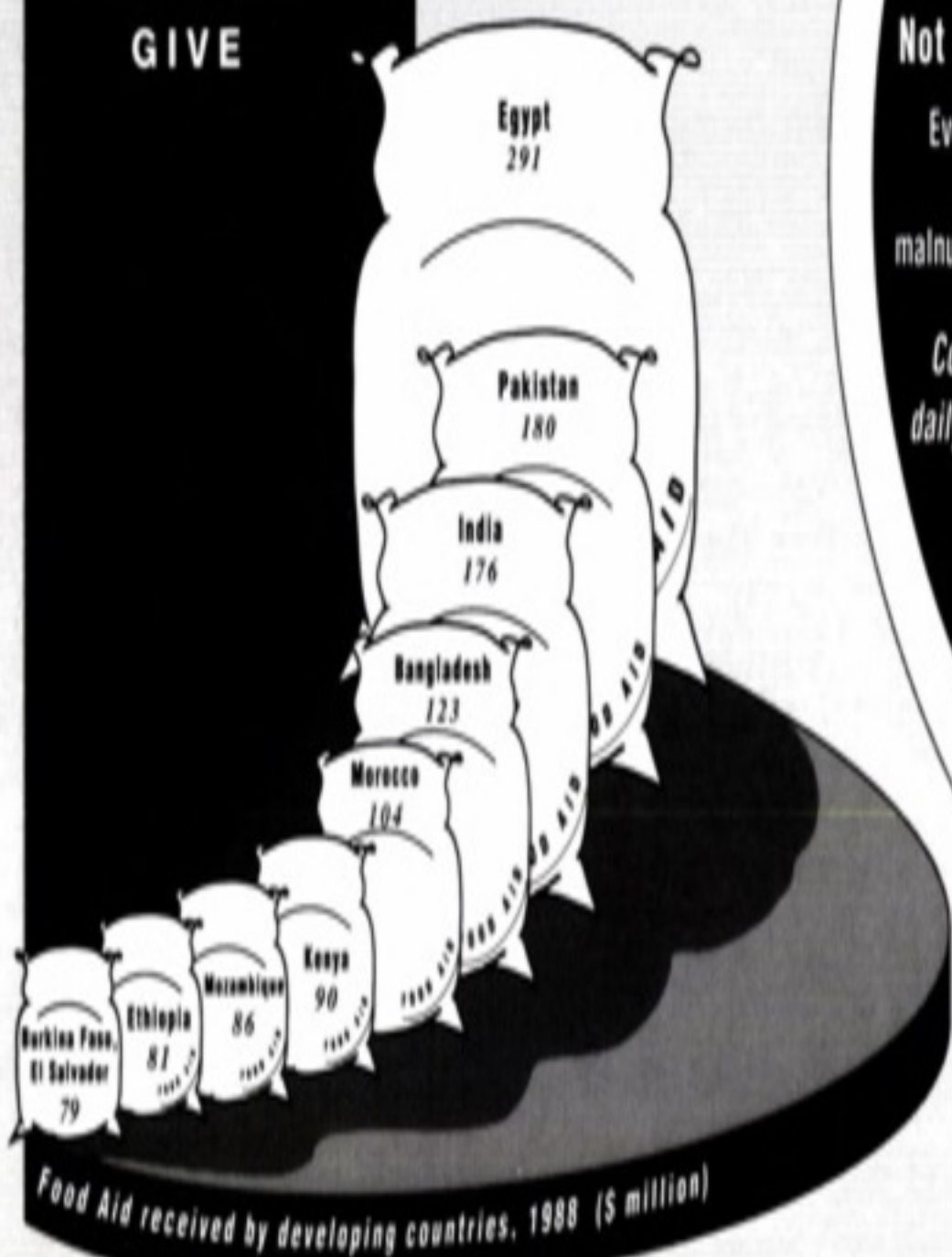
The World Health Organization recommends a minimum daily adult calorie consumption of 2,600 per head with variations for age, occupation and other factors. Yet average consumption in many poor countries falls far below this minimum, while that in rich countries is far in excess of it.

PERILOUS PRICES

Many Third World countries are dependent on the world market price of just a few agricultural crops. During the 1980s prices for many primary commodities fell to their lowest levels since World War Two. Despite some recovery, average prices are still lower than in 1980.



WHAT WE GIVE



In 1988 67 countries received food aid.³ Some of them – Mozambique, Burkina Faso, Ethiopia – were in dire need of food supplies. But the appearance of others at the top of this particular league table has much more to do with their status as key Western strategic allies.

GROWING PAINS

In many developing countries food production per head has declined over the last decade, often because farming is disrupted by civil war.

Growth per head in food production between 1977 and 1988⁷, selected countries (including those featured in this issue).

Nicaragua	-5.5
Zambia	-3.2
Mozambique	-2.2
Bangladesh	-1.5
Philippines	-0.7
Ethiopia	0.4
Ghana	0.6
India	0.7
Brazil	0.8
China	3.5



1 The State of World Population 1991, UNFPA. 2 The State of Food and Agriculture 1989, FAO. 3 Human Development Report 1991, UNDP. 4 The State of the World's Children 1991, UNICEF. 5 World Development Report 1991, World Bank. 6 World Health Organization. 7 The Economist Book of World Vital Statistics 1990.



In summer, dog meat is too *yang*

The Chinese are not vegetarians but they don't feed their soybeans to animals, as we do in the West. In Guangzhou (Canton) Jane Parry talks to Kenny and to Mr Lau about the beneficent bean.

SALLY & RICHARD GREENHILL/PHOTOGRAPHERS PHOTO LIBRARY



'SOYA: what a wonderful food!' mocks Kenny, a young Cantonese man, euphemistically labelled by the Government as 'a youth waiting for work'.

'No, but seriously, it's a great thing. You name one other plant that you can make so many things from. We Chinese don't eat much meat, that's why we are so healthy!' he says with a grin. 'It's everybody's food, beancurd, no matter whether you are rich or

poor. Even the emperor ate it.'

Though poor, in 1990s Guangzhou, Kenny is in a position to demand a more varied diet and he finds the taste of plain *dofu* is boring. 'I prefer it fried. First it's dried, then steamed and fried in oil. The only problem is that in the summer it's too *yang* (*yin* and *yang*: believed to stimulate the body's cool and hot humours respectively). So it's better to cook it in soup with a little salt-dried fish head and a pork knuckle. This is a very popular dish in the summer in Guangzhou and it's not quite so *yang* that way,' he explains.

Bean-curd is available in many forms at the markets. Red and white *dofu* are preserved and sold in little jars; *chou dofu* (literally 'stinking bean-curd') is a winter food often used as a snack; while *dofuhua* – sweetened bean-curd – is very *yin* and therefore refreshing in summer. And it's cheap: a portion for one person costs just over one yuan (about 20 US cents).

People like Kenny buy their vegetables in the Qingping market. The market has become a tourist attraction for Western visitors, as it provides evidence of the maxim that the Cantonese eat everything with four legs except a table, and everything with wings except an aeroplane.

You walk through a long covered lane of stalls selling ginseng and other Chinese medicinal herbs, as well as dried goods,

including beetles and wasps – not to mention the lizards, dried, flattened and tied in pairs to sticks. Near the meat market there is a strong smell of droppings and blood from the freshly killed animals, intensified by the steamy humid air.

In the winter the tourists can find what they are looking for: dogs, a breed similar to Staffordshire bull terriers, crammed into cages, or freshly slaughtered for a favourite southern Chinese delicacy. It is said that if Western squeamishness about animals as pets can be overcome, dog has a taste that is so good it is addictive.

In the summer dog meat is considered to be too *yang*, and goes off the market. Still, there is a range of endangered species and cuddly animals on offer instead: raccoons from Guangxi province, selling for 45 yuan each (\$9). There is one already skinned, waiting for a buyer. Another is shivering and staring from its cage with listless eyes. One of its front legs is missing.

Most shoppers are regular buyers from particular stalls, like that of Mr Lau, the beansprout seller. 'Today, business is OK, not too bad, not too good,' says Mr Lau. 'On a good day I can sell 10 barrels of bean sprouts – each one holds 30 *jin* (15 kilos).'

Mr Lau is very shy and speaks in soft halting country Cantonese. Like most Cantonese, he can't or doesn't choose to understand *Putonhqua* (Mandarin, the offi-



SOURCE: NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC

Bean-curd: cheap and very *yin*.



cial dialect of China) and even in his own dialect he takes time to warm to the subject of his business. Too many people in China ask too many nosey questions.

Still, the presence of a foreigner (even a nosey one) is good for business – people come over to see what's going on and some leave with a bag of bean sprouts.

Tanned and lean, Mr Lau's physique shows that sitting at a market stall is only one part of his life. He lives in Tianhe, where the suburbs meet the countryside. 'I get up at four, load up the bicycle with barrels and then it takes just over an hour to cycle into town. I stay here until I'm all sold out, usually around eight or nine at night, earlier on a good day.'

He lives in a small house together with his family who are also his helpers. When not at market himself Mr Lau's time is taken up with nurturing the beans and buying fresh supplies. Without any hi-tech temperature or humidity control equipment, the beans require a lot of attention during their five-day gestation period. If the beans are not sold, they cannot be kept because the Laus do not have refrigeration facilities – unsold beans will be eaten by the family or sold to the neighbours as food for pigs.

'I buy a few sacks a month. All the beans I use come from the north and I buy them privately. It's cheaper to buy them through a private network than at the gov-

ernment grain store.

'It's hard work, but it's OK. I make enough to get by,' he adds with another shy smile, unwilling to reveal amidst an audience of customers how much he makes. A buyer comes along, the conversation breaks off. Lau expertly weighs the quantity of beans in his hands. None of his customers insist that he use the scales.

Mr Lau settles back on his makeshift seat – an upturned barrel. He is wearing a thin, cheap cotton shirt and old but smart rolled-up trousers. He has an open sore on his foot and wears broken plastic slippers. His appearance might indicate that he is living in poverty but by peasant Chinese standards Mr Lau, like so many of his Cantonese counterparts, is probably doing very nicely.

Since the Government moved away from central planning and opened the economy up to the market, he has been able to enter the world of private enterprise. It is more unstable, with no state work unit to provide an 'iron rice-bowl' (a Chinese expression for job security), but if business goes well the benefits make it worthwhile.

No-one will be in a position to tell him when he can get married, for instance, or when he can try for his first child, or force him to adhere to the one-child policy. If he makes enough money and he wants to have a second child, he will be rich enough to pay any fines imposed by the Government.

At 38, however, Mr Lau remains single. 'Where's the missus? You tell me – I'm too busy making a living to go looking for a wife!' he laughs.

All the same, lucrative possibilities have occasionally loomed on the horizon. 'Once an American guy came by. He said he wanted to set up a wholesale business. Flying my bean sprouts out to the United States. But it didn't work out. Those Americans are crazy, they're so bloody picky. He told me the sprouts weren't up to American standards.'

He picks up a handful of beansprouts, turning and tapping them gently until they all sit the same way up. 'This guy said in America everything has to be the same size, all neat and tidy like this. You see the brown root there? That wouldn't do, he told me, not nice-looking enough for the Americans.'

'I tried to negotiate and set up a joint venture. But no, in the end he went to a bigger supplier. Crazy though, wanting them all the same size. They don't grow like that.'

'And you know what else he told me? That you Westerners like to cut off the bean and just eat the sprout! Don't you know it's the bean that's got all the taste and the goodness?' Little does he know that soya beans in the West are only really considered fit to be fed to the animals that will become our steak or our ham. ■

Jane Parry is a journalist based in Hong Kong.

The Ford Soybean

JOURNALISTS couldn't believe their eyes as they watched car magnate Henry Ford seize an axe and hack away at a brand new automobile. High jinks and public-relations flair came together in November 1940 as Ford demonstrated the toughness of a car body made from soya-based plastic.

Ford's antics were based on his faith in the soybean's value to industry. Saying that he'd like to 'grow cars rather than mine them', by 1935 his assembly lines were pumping a bushel of beans into each automobile – as paint, body materials and oils.

Oil-derived chemicals were to elbow soybeans off industry's research agenda, but after World War Two beans were back with a new role in the West as farm crops.

In Asia of course soybeans have a rather longer history, stretching back perhaps 5,000 years. So vital were they in China that they were elevated to become one of the five 'sacred grains' along with rice, wheat, barley and millet. Farmers value them highly because they not only are rich in protein but also feed nutrients into the soil as they grow. As a result the different varieties have names like *Great Treasure*, *Brings Happiness* and *Yellow Jewel*.

As *dofu*, soya milk, *miso* paste, *tempeh* (bean cakes), soy sauce and bean sprouts, soybeans become a variety of foods in the East. But today the US is the world's biggest producer and consumer, while Brazil and Argentina are the leading exporters, growing beans to feed rich-world animals. Other developing countries, such as Zambia, Nigeria and India, are beginning



to grow soya to feed their people.

Hectare for hectare, soybeans yield more protein than meat – 162 kilograms compared with just 9 kilos for beef – yet they are not a major part of human diets in rich countries. In the West beans are grown mainly to feed animals, with the oil by-product used as margarine, vegetable oil, mayonnaise and other dressings. In the US, the amount of land given over to soybeans has tripled since 1960 but most of this is converted to animal feed – even though it takes 16 kilos of grain and soya feed to produce one kilo of beef.

Lately, though, another Chinese first has been catching on fast in the US: there are about 45 brands of soya ice cream on the market and sales are booming. Maybe the West will be won after all.

SOURCE: NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC



Yellow perils



*We expect our bananas to be beautiful and blemish-free. But how does that expectation affect the lives of banana workers? **Ramon Isberto** talks to people on a Philippine plantation about their life and work.*

It is a leisurely two-hour drive from the southern Philippines city of Davao to the 16 square kilometres of banana farms run by Dole Philippines, local subsidiary of the US food giant Castle and Cooke. The last 30 minutes of the ride grinds through dusty gravel roads that cut deep into a forest of banana trees planted on the fertile lowlands of Mindanao island.

Most of the 2,000 or so banana workers live right inside this human-made forest, either in clusters of small wooden homes or in crowded bunkhouses, surrounded by fruit trees (but thankfully no bananas).

Compared with the landless poor of Mindanao, the banana workers are not badly off. Their regular income allows some security. But the work is tough. Their lives are dominated by the back-breaking, hazardous task of cultivating and harvesting the bananas. It is, the workers say with much irony, like caring for an infant.

'The bananas here are better loved and

cared for than the workers,' says Connie Actub, health-and-safety officer with the National Federation of Labour, a militant trade union that has, against huge odds, organized farm workers here. 'Every possible step is taken to keep the harvested fruits from suffering the slightest bruise,' she says. 'That is hardly how the workers are treated.'

To achieve the unblemished fruits demanded by the world market, workers must constantly guard against bruising. The importance of this is highlighted by the vocabulary used in the trade to describe the different scars on the fruit.

'First there are *point scars*,' explains Yolanda Martinez, a supervisor in the packing plant. 'They occur when the tip rubs against the skin of other bananas,' she adds, picking up one of the greenish fruits to show what she means. 'Next are *maturity stains*, *sunburns* and *latex stains* from plant sap.'

Yolanda seems a natural leader. There is a calm, unhurried firmness in her ges-

tures and movements. She is tough. She has to be. 'We even have things called *dust bruises* which are caused, believe it or not, by dust rubbing against the banana skin.'

Fruit scars are also caused by pests. To prevent this, banana plantations use the most potent brew of pesticides and fungicides in Philippine farming. A 1984 Labour Ministry study showed that the banana sector consumes 80 per cent of the herbicides and 90 per cent of the fungicides used in the country. Banana plantations are also allowed by the Government to apply hazardous pesticides such as Paraquat, Mocap and Furadan which are not permitted on other crops.

There are mounting fears that over two decades' heavy use of toxic agricultural chemicals may soon produce a wicked backlash. Trade-union organizers who have long focused on such basic labour issues as wages and benefits in their dealings with Dole and the other big banana transnational, Del Monte, are now paying more attention

to health-and-safety concerns.

'When we started our health-and-safety programme five years ago the workers did not believe us when we said the chemicals they were handling every day were dangerous,' explains Actub. 'They even told us that the pesticides they sprayed on the bananas cured small sores on their arms.'

But attitudes have changed as tell-tale signs of ecological abuse and health hazards have increased in recent years. With the heavy use of chemicals on the soil, workers are becoming uneasy about the purity of underground water they use for drinking. And the direct effects on people are marked.

'We use Nematicides against worm pests,' says tractor driver Joel de Asis. 'We spread the red granules on the ground. When it's hot the chemicals give off a terrible smell. The stink is so bad it makes your head spin and some people vomit.'

Perhaps even worse are the blue plastic bags used to cover the bananas while they are ripening on the stem. These are laced with an insecticide called Chorpyrifos, classified 'moderately hazardous' by the World Health Organization. When the bag

is opened, dust particles fly everywhere and workers inhale large amounts.

People are also exposed to large amounts of pesticides in the packing plants. 'All the chemicals used in the field end up in here,' points out Yolanda Martinez. 'Freshly harvested bananas are first placed in large water tanks to wash off the chemicals. Many workers who handle the bananas in these tanks find their fingernails become discoloured – or even fall off,' she says, opening her hands in explanation.

You sense the workers' love-hate relationship with the fruit in the way they tend to identify their own ailments as banana diseases. For instance, bananas are sometimes ravaged by 'Sigatoka disease' which lays ugly rashes on the leaves. Workers joke that they too suffer from this disease. For them, the symptoms are white spots on the back of the neck and head. They look like ringworm marks and are itchy and sore.

Workers are worried because they have few of the safety devices prescribed under government safety regulations such as rubber gloves and boots, head coverings, full-body coveralls, respirators and rubber boots.

They often end up providing their own protection, which can do more harm than good. 'With face masks, for instance, what's needed are respirators with replaceable activated charcoal as filters,' explains Connie Actub. 'But the Company says these are too expensive. So workers use foam masks instead, which make things worse because the foam absorbs the chemicals and the workers inhale them even more.'

Ben Pinchon joins us. His job is to spray emerging banana fruit with pesticides. He carries a 20-kilogram container of chemicals on his back. He is supposed to have a face mask, rubber gloves and boots.

'I have none of these,' he shrugs. 'At the moment my health is OK,' adds this father of nine children. 'I'm still quite young at 47 but wait till I get past 50. Then I'll get all sorts of illnesses.'

People on the plantations blame the lack of safety equipment on the peculiar contract arrangement that Dole applies here. Dole grows bananas on its own directly managed plantation in Panabo. But its most profitable farms appear to be the 10 'collective farms' which it put together in the mid-1970s through contracts with over 200 small landowners. Technically workers on these are employed not by Dole but by the small farmers; in practice they are under the company's control.

Yolanda Martinez's mother, Esperanza, is one of these small farmers. After her husband died she was left with a 15-hectare farm. Like everyone else in the area, Esperanza planted the land to rice, corn and *abacca* (Manila hemp, a fibre produced from a type of banana and sold for cash). When Dole came along and offered her what seemed a very lucrative deal to plant bananas for export on her farm, she signed up, along with many other small farmers. Today, she is deep in debt to Dole for fertilizer and other 'services'. Many farmers who used to grow food are in the same situation.

Workers get paid different rates. 'We are doing exactly the same work as a regular Dole employee. But we are paid only 77 pesos (\$2.75) a day compared with 125 pesos for regular employees,' says Martinez. 'This way the company gets the control it wants but also avoids what it does not want – the responsibility of giving workers decent wages and the necessary safety equipment.'

Despite the hardships, the *bayanihan* or co-operative spirit is alive and well on the plantations. People keep the tradition of holding fiestas once a year. Groups of families contribute savings to a kitty which is spent on a cow or some pigs for roasting, washed down with cheap gin. Once the festivities are over the saving starts again for next year – and so does the ministering to that tender infant, the banana. ■

Ramon Isberto is a journalist with Inter Press Services in the Philippines.

Banana-boat diplomacy

WHEN Brazilian singer Carmen Miranda hit the US in the late 1930s she caused a storm. Dressed in outrageous costumes, topped with hats featuring bananas and other exotic fruit, she sang and danced her way to Hollywood stardom.

While she was best known for her gutsy comic performances she played a part also in a serious political drama: the realignment of American power in the Western hemisphere. Carmen Miranda's movies helped make Latin America safe for the US's banana companies at a time when its imperialism was attracting wider criticism.

Between 1880 and 1930 the US colonized or invaded Hawaii, the Philippines, Puerto Rico, the Dominican Republic, Cuba and Nicaragua. Each produced plantation crops – bananas, sugar, coffee and pineapples – that the US was ready to fight for.

But as gunboat diplomacy became less acceptable, more subtle means were sought to control Latin America. As part of Roosevelt's 'Good Neighbour' policy, co-operation replaced overt militarism. For the Latin American governments which had been alienated by Uncle Sam's aggression were precisely those which US business would now have to woo if the country was to climb out of the Depression.

So, how to keep the Latin Americans in line? How to encourage US investment south of the border and keep ahead of the British, French and Dutch in the regional commodities race?

Carmen Miranda paved the way for tourism and investment. Her films such as 1940's *Down Argentine Way* showed South Americans as warm and friendly people, welcoming US dollars with a kiss. Her image helped make exotic fruits such as bananas

part of the wholesome diet of Middle America, so expanding sales and increasing US investment in a crop that had only come to the Americas with the slaves.

The United Fruit Company, one of the biggest growers, made its own dazzling contribution to the new banana-consciousness: 'Chiquita Banana'. Inspired by Carmen Miranda's screen success, advertisers created a half-banana, half-woman cartoon char-



acter who sang a jingle to sell her fruit.

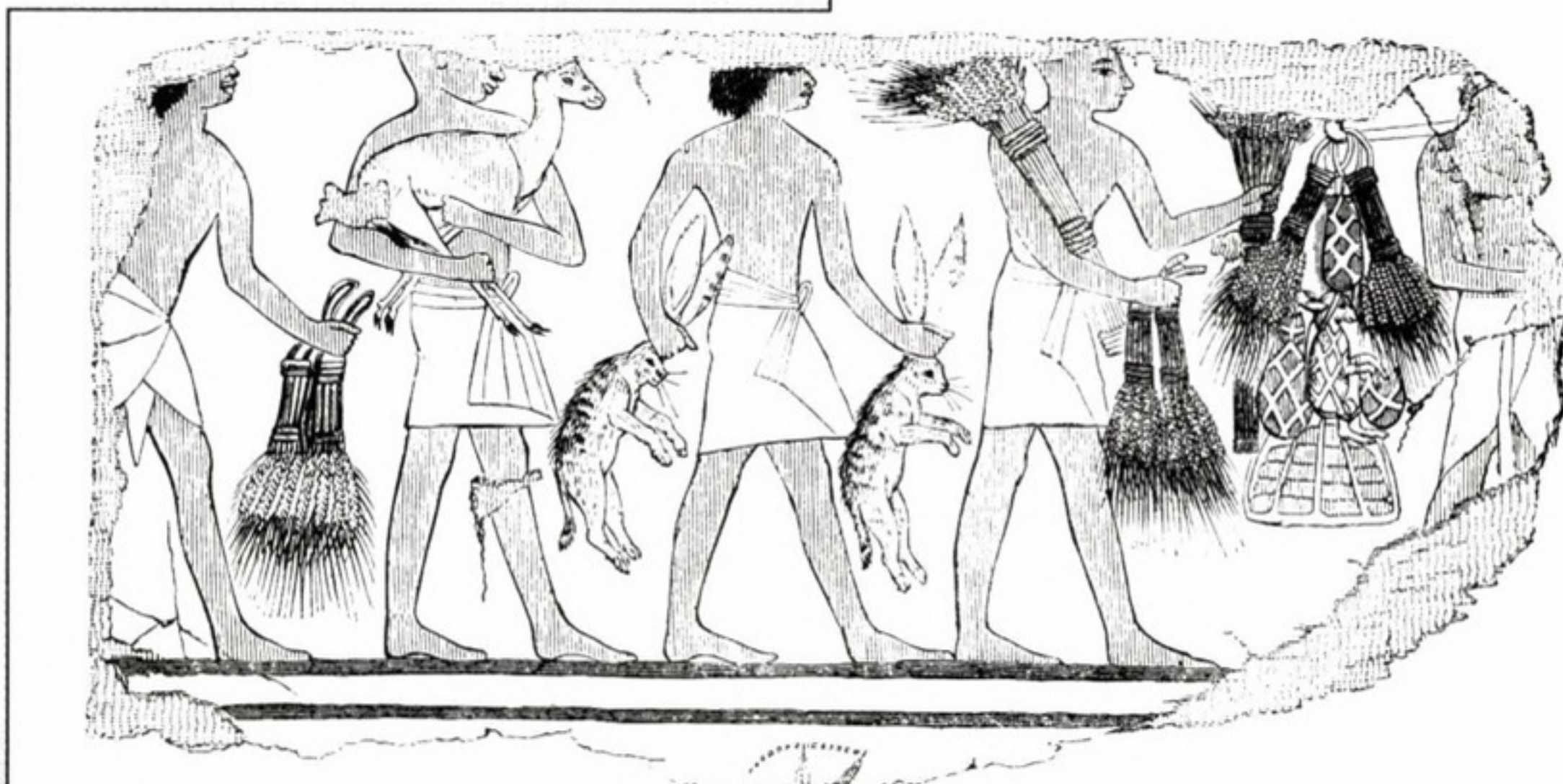
On the plantations, far away from Chiquita Banana's happy, wholesome ditty, the sweat and toil produced a sadder song. Wretched conditions affect both men and women in the banana industry, but while women prepare and pack the bunches of fruit for export, men do the machete wielding. The flip side of Chiquita Banana's song is that of the banana cutter: *Praise God an' my big right han' / I will live an' die a banana man.*

SIMPLY — A history of food



1. Managing the magic

About 12,000 years ago there was a revolution in the way people obtained their food. Instead of foraging and hunting, groups began to settle in one place, secure in the knowledge that they would have enough to eat. It was almost certainly women, the gatherers of berries and seeds while men hunted, who realized that plant growing was not completely haphazard, that there was a connection between putting seeds into the ground and harvesting the grains. This made it worthwhile to stay in one place and tend the young plants.



2. Ancestors of our food

In the Middle East the hairy precursors of modern wheat and barley were grown; in what is now Mexico around 7,000 years ago people had begun to cultivate the corn, beans and squash that still sustain them. Further south, in the Andes, potatoes were the staple fare. In China millet was cultivated in the north and rice in the south; while in Africa millet grew in the Sahara, then lightly wooded, and indigenous 'red' rice in the great bend of the Niger River in what is now Mali.

The domestication of animals such as dogs, sheep and goats began at about the same time as settled agriculture. Techniques for farming improvements abounded. One of the first was irrigation which in turn led to the growth of larger settlements of people. Another was the selective breeding of plants and animals.

3. Traditional nutrition

In almost all traditional cultures people ate foods that blended together in a wholesome way. The rice and pulses of Asia; the corn and beans of the Americas

and later of Africa; the wheat and dairy products of the Middle East — all complement and enhance each other's protein to produce a nutritional balance that is hard to beat. And these 'twinned' foods tend to be healthy for the

environment: beans planted among the rows of corn fix nitrogen back into the soil, replenishing its vitality. Most people gained their protein from pulses and grains — meat was for rich people or for high-days and holidays.



4. The spice of new horizons

From the beginnings of settled agriculture there was trade in food – at first in spices such as pepper, which enhanced the taste of food, rather than in the foodstuffs themselves. But in the fifteenth century Europeans started to explore and settle to the west, south and east – and this led to major changes in the patterns of world agriculture.

Local food crops were displaced by crops that suited European needs and palates. To control production, the European powers took over tropical regions as colonies, and the wealth from agriculture was transferred back to Spain or Britain or Holland to fuel their own economic development.



6. Africa's fragile balance

Unlike Asia and South America, Africa was not endowed with rich and fertile earth. Knowing the limitations of their soil, people hunted and gathered, or herded animals for their livelihood. Where there was cultivation, African population rarely outgrew the soil's ability to support it. Sorghum, bulrush millet and finger millet were grown, plants which can tolerate dry soils and light rainfall. The commerce in slaves upset the balance. Apart from robbing the continent of its strongest young people, the trade put the emphasis on fighting rather than on agriculture. Instead of farming, people found themselves led to war by kings and chiefs eager to exchange captives for European guns and blankets.

5. Sugar and slaves

Sugar was the first major 'cash' or export crop grown on a wide scale, requiring a huge labour force. From the sixteenth century through the next 300 years, the Portuguese, Dutch, British and French between them transported at least 10 million Africans to South America and the Caribbean as slaves.

The 'triangular trade' of slaves to the Americas, sugar to Europe and manufactured goods to Africa was lucrative. Sugar became increasingly important in Europe, especially for use in tea and coffee, the new beverages. By the 1670s sugar was so vital for trade that the Dutch were prepared to give up New York to the British in exchange for the sugar lands of Surinam in South America.



7. A rich land's world

When the Europeans divided Africa between them, in the nineteenth century, the old balance was utterly lost. Land which had grown food was now turned over to crops that would satisfy the industrializing nations of Europe: cotton, coffee, cocoa, peanuts, palm oil, bananas, rubber, tea and sisal. Trade restrictions and low prices for these 'commodities' and other raw materials have driven African and most other Third World countries into debt.

The colonial model continues to shape world agriculture, even in an era when almost all the countries of Africa, Asia and Latin America are politically independent. This is a world which produces enough food to give each person 3,600 calories a day – plenty – and yet still sees people suffering from lack of food.





A legacy for my (23) children

Ghanaian farmer Kwabena Nten has never tasted chocolate but he has given his life to cocoa – and been given a good life in return. Now he fears for the future, as Ajoa Yeboah-Afari learns.

MAGGIE MURRAY/FORMAT

KWABENA Nten was in his teens when he dropped out of school to do what he loved best: cocoa farming. Now in his fifties, he has no regrets about choosing this life. His sinewy, tall body bears witness to the years of toil but his youthful looks show it has been no punishment.

He's in town today to buy provisions for his homestead which has no electricity and no local market or shops. Every so often he breaks off from his story and nods at a passing acquaintance.

He farms on family land in the forest at Senekrom, in the Dormaa-Abenkro district, about 300 miles from the Ghanaian capital Accra. 'The Senekrom area has good soil for cocoa and other crops,' says Nten. He built a mud house, the first of what later developed into a hamlet that he named 'Kyekyewere' – an Akan-language name meaning 'Take heart'.

Most farms have names, some funny, others philosophical. Kyekyewere was the first of four hamlets that Nten established. 'The fourth one I called "Mmfa hia nnsuro" which means "Don't let poverty stop you from realizing your dreams",' he explains with a telling smile.

No-one seems quite sure how cocoa came to Ghana, but credit for its introduction is generally given to Tetteh Quarshie, a trader who may have brought it from the island of Fernando Po (now Bioko) in 1895. Once rooted in Ghana, the 'golden pod' rapidly became the mainstay of the country's economy. By 1911 Ghana had become the world's leading producer, exporting about 23,000 tonnes annually, and its output continued to increase until 1965, when it reached a peak of nearly 600,000 tonnes.

But that's all changed now. In the late 1970s Ghana lost its leading position to Ivory Coast and by 1988 production was down to 278,000 tonnes. Nten has visited a

farmer friend in Ivory Coast and, from what he saw, farmers there get a better deal from their government.

Nten is among those who link the decline in Ghana's production to the lower prices (relative to other crops) the Government has paid cocoa farmers. This began after Independence in 1957 as President Nkrumah tried in vain to steer the country away from its dependency on the colonial cash crop, cocoa, towards self-sufficiency through industrialization. But it has continued due to an overvalued currency, labour shortages and poor roads.

Kwabena Nten has done well despite this. He has about 40 hectares of cocoa and eight full-time workers. Last year he sold around 90 bags to the Cocoa Board; well fermented and dried beans that contribute to Ghana's reputation for the best cocoa in the world.

Recently, like many other farmers, Nten has diversified into other food crops because he gets paid more for them. He now grows maize, plantains, cocoyam and cassava as well as coffee and oil palm. Recent additions are sugar cane, fish farming and honey bees. They all bring in good money, and he likes the challenge they pose.

Cash-crop diversification is a fairly new

practice in Ghanaian peasant families. Until recently, farmers grew cocoa for cash and food for the family. This meant that the income from the sale of the cocoa beans had to last the family the whole year.

'In those days,' recalls Nten, 'Everybody grew food crops so who would buy yours? It's not like today when even cassava or plantain fetches more than cocoa. At that time the only thing of commercial value was cocoa, since we knew the Government would always buy all we could grow. That's why we spent all our money and energies on it.'

Why then does he continue with cocoa farming?

'Simple,' he replies. 'Cocoa is *agya-padee* (legacy). It's the only thing a farmer can leave his children in the knowledge that there will always be a market for it.'

'Cocoa trees live long, although in the early stages work is very tedious. The young plants need a lot of care. They stretch your resources so tight. You have nothing to your name, and your family is deprived of everything. This period is known as the "wife-desertion stage" – if God doesn't help you, your wife will leave you because you cannot feed the family. I've seen it happen many times,' he adds, shaking his head.

'But once the trees mature and start fruiting, the cocoa needs little care between harvests. With food and other crops you need regular maintenance such as weeding – otherwise the yield will be poor.'

Nten's farming calendar begins with seed nursing in October. He then makes his annual trip to Bawku in northern Ghana to recruit some general labourers. He signs a contract with them under which he under-

Kwabena Nten: for work he wears Western-style clothes.



'I'm still a sucker for chocolate,' writes 13-year-old Ann. 'Who could be bored with it? I first remember tasting it when I was about five, at a friend's birthday party. His mother had set out a wonderful array of food – crisps and sweets. In particular there were Smarties: chocolate drops dressed up in bright colours. That orange Smartie. My downfall. As I bit through the crackly outside the flavour of the chocolate began to flood onto my taste buds. Delicious... a wonderful discovery had been made!'

This teenager's enthusiasm has been shared down the centuries and across the continents – chocolate has a history linked by intrigue, love and money.

For 2,000 years the cacao (cocoa) plant has been cultivated in Central America. The Aztecs believed that the beans were divine food, fit for their bird-god Quetzalcoatl – a notion that Swedish naturalist Linnaeus perpetuated in the plant's classificatory name: 'theobroma' (Greek for god and food).

The beans had a secular value too. They were the unit of currency in the region. Descendants of the Aztecs paid taxes in beans until the 1880s, while three centuries or so earlier at least 10 beans were required to secure the sexual services of a prostitute in Nicaragua.

Consorting and chocolate have an intertwined history. The seventeenth-century chocolate houses of Europe provided a respectable public place in which upper-class women and men could meet without impropriety. Casanova, who built up a reputation as a stud, is believed to have pre-

takes to feed, clothe and house them for a year, to bear any medical expenses, and to pay them 100,000 cedis (\$300) at the end. Labourers on other cocoa farms might sign an *abusa* ('divide into three') agreement: when the beans are sold they take one third of the proceeds.

By the time Nten returns from the north, it is land-clearing time. Then comes the rainy season in May or June and the race is on to plant out the seedlings. As soon as this is done the women plant food crops – mostly cocoyams and yams – among the seedlings. These cocoa seedlings will take a long time to mature: at least eight years if they are an old type like *Tetteh Quarshie*, or three to four years if they are the new hybrid variety.

There's very little rest from work for Nten, his two wives and the labourers. His day begins about 6.00am when he listens to the radio news. Then he washes and dons his work trousers and shirt – cheap second-hand imports from Europe. For farmers, breakfast is a luxury, but on some mornings when there isn't too much work to be done they eat *ampesie*, a dish made from boiled yam, cassava, cocoyam or plantain.

Every farming community has one day when it is taboo to work on the land, when

ferred chocolate to champagne as the spur to his amorous antics.

Maybe he found that the drink's caffeine-like chemical *theobromine* gave him the necessary lift. Or it could be that he experienced the effects of *phenylethylamine* – cocoa's analogue of a chemical which occurs natu-



rally in humans and induces euphoria. This could explain why love-sick people seem to crave chocolate, for the level of this amphetamine-like chemical drops when you are depressed.

Perhaps this also explains a bit of seventeenth-century gossip. A lady of the French court, the Marquise de Coëtlogon gave birth to a black baby. Wags suggested that this was because she had eaten so much chocolate during her pregnancy. But perhaps she was love-sick.

clothes can be washed and visits paid, and on Nten's farm that is a Friday. Some Sundays Nten also goes to church.

'But we have to forget about church when there's work to be done,' he laughs. 'When we have rain and we're transplanting cocoa we're anxious to get it all done before the rains stop. So going to church is out of the question. That's when we don't even waste time washing our hands before we eat, we swallow the dirt with the food, mud and all.'

It's busy as well during harvesting from September to December. 'The pods will be a lovely yellow colour showing that they are ready,' says Nten. 'The women take them in baskets to a clearing where we cut them open to extract the whiteish wet beans that taste sweet on the tongue. Then they are heaped in a mound on plantain leaves spread on the ground, covered with more leaves and left to ferment for six days.'

'Next, we carry the beans to the drying beds,' he says. These are made from wood and bamboo, put up near their huts by the farmers so they can easily rake the beans to ensure even drying. If the weather is good, Nten reckons it takes about one week for the beans to dry; in bad weather it takes longer.

'When the beans are dried they will be a



MAGGIE MURRAY/FORMAT

fine brown colour. They can then be bagged and transported to the Ghana Cocoa Board buying centre. But prices are not that good and things are so expensive. At present two bags of cocoa can't even buy a half-piece of cloth (six metres, the required length for a woman's costume).'

Nten worries about the future. 'In spite of all the hard work I've put into growing cocoa to have a legacy for my children, so far none of them has shown any interest in it,' he says, with a rueful look which reveals the years in his face.

It can safely be said that Nten has a lot of children. He catalogues them on his fingers: 'My senior wife has nine; the junior has six; a former wife had six, but we lost one;

another, divorced, had four and also lost one; not to mention the side issues...' he recites with laughter.

Putting so many children through school, along with the constant investment in new crops, has left Nten with very little spare cash. 'If I were younger, starting life afresh, I would be an advocate of family planning,' he chuckles.

But like most farmers, his personal needs are few. When they go to the market at Abenkro, highest on the list are salt, soap, radio batteries, matches and smoked fish.

Sometimes Nten's wives bring vegetables to sell and use the money to buy what they need. He's only too happy to encourage them to keep the money they make so that he won't have to spend too much on them.

Nten hasn't given much thought to what white people do with the cocoa they buy from Ghana. 'I just grow it for the Government to buy,' he says. He believes that it is the 'Engresi' (British) who are the main buyers, and the 'Fransi' (French) too. 'I've heard that cocoa is an important food for them. They say that the whites dote on sugary things and they use cocoa in these foods and they make "chocrate" with it.'

He's never tasted chocolate and doesn't think it is available in Dormaa-Abenkro (it is). 'What do I need chocrate for? My stomach knows only plantain and cocoyam.'

Ajoa Yeboah-Afari freelances from Accra. She was formerly Deputy Editor of the *Mirror*, a national weekly newspaper in Ghana.

Ghana used to rake in foreign exchange for its cocoa – but times are much harder now.

Worth reading on... food

An entertaining and interesting look at the origins of some foods, which gave rise to the idea of the 'meal' behind this magazine, is Margaret Visser's **Much Depends on Dinner** (Penguin 1989). Women's role in a range of foreign-policy transactions – often unseen, seldom considered – is the subject of **Bananas, Beaches and Bases** (Pandora 1989) by Cynthia Enloe. John Warnock's **The Politics of Hunger** (Methuen 1987) gives an excellent historical view of world food production as well as analysis of the current situation. For a detailed look at the effects of the Green Revolution, read **New Seeds and Poor People** (Unwin Hyman 1989) by Michael Lipton with Richard Longhurst. Henk Hobbelink's **Biotechnology and the Future of World Agriculture** (Zed 1991) sets the biotech debate in the context of sustainable agriculture. And the classics **Food First** (Abacus 1980) and **World Hunger: Twelve Myths** (Food First/Grove Press 1986), both by Joe Collins and Frances Moore Lappé, are still hard to beat for a clear account of the powers at play in the world food arena.

Ghanaian gold: locally-made chocolate.



SOUTH AFRICA

Reclaimed

Evicted farmers return

IN May South African police opened fire on white protesters for the first time in living memory. It was at Goedgevonden. This is just one of several communities where, encouraged by the prospect of land reform, blacks have returned to land they claim as theirs. About

1978 and trucked 130 miles to a site in western Transvaal. Then in 1984, without their knowledge, they were incorporated into the so-called 'independent' homeland of Bophuthatswana. The South African Government then refused to negotiate with the community on the grounds that they were no longer South African citizens.

In the meantime the Government leased their land to white farmers. 'There were 7,000 people using the land and surviving on it at Goedgevonden,' says Mr Olifile Segopolo, the community's

On the move in South Africa

250 people went back in early April and started rebuilding their homes. They provoked the hostility of neighbouring white farmers. Police had to intervene when the extreme right-wing political party Afrikaanse Weerstandsbeweging (AWB) attacked and tried to evict the black community.

The community won the right to appeal against an eviction order and are allowed to stay on the land pending the outcome, which could take up to two years. But the Department of Agricultural Development has placed armed guards on the gates and they refuse entry to anyone not listed as a 'resident'.

Lawyers, the Red Cross and the welfare organization Operation Hunger have been denied access. Mr Smit, a Department official, said: 'We won't stop people giving aid to the squatters. They just have to stop at the gate and the people can walk up from their houses to fetch it.'

The black community of Goedgevonden was forcibly removed in

leader. 'Now only six people are using the land and we 7,000 are suffering.'

In March of this year the Government released its White Paper on land reform, abolishing the notorious Land Acts that had carved the country up. But the White Paper does not restore land to those who were evicted, supporting the status quo 'in the interests of peace and progress'. In August 1990 President de Klerk promised white farmers that their land would be forever safe.

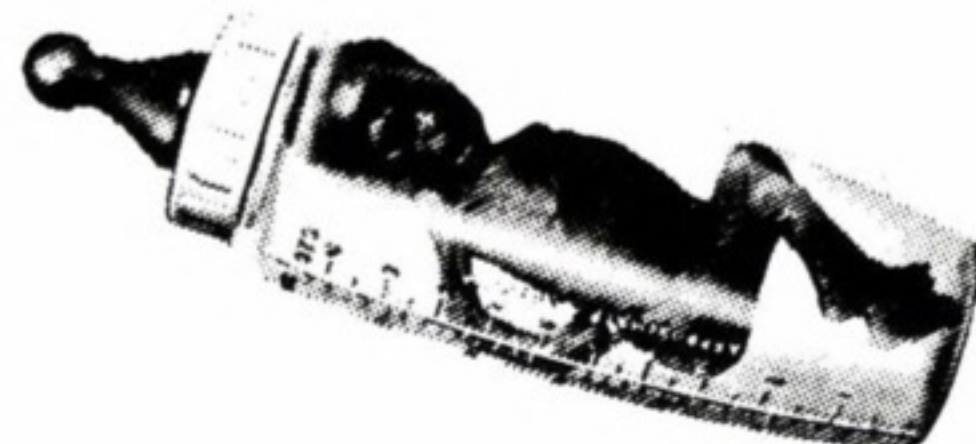
Dispossessed communities across South Africa rejected the White Paper, arguing that an independent Land Commission needs to investigate and assess conflicting land claims.

The future for Goedgevonden is by no means certain, but the black residents know what they want. 'I just want to be a farmer on my farm,' says Mr Segopolo, 'then I'll be satisfied.'

Matthew Sherrington/Oxfam (UK & Ireland)

Church boycott

The General Synod of the Church of England has voted for the first time to back a boycott of a commercial product. The product is Nescafé, made by the world's largest food multinational, Nestlé, which continues to promote baby milk in ways that undermine breastfeeding. The Synod motion calls on Nestlé to 'end the



promotion of breastmilk substitutes by means of free and subsidised supplies to Third World hospitals and maternity wards'. Nestlé has responded by writing to The Times and by sending out 14,000 letters to members of the clergy attacking the Synod decision and calling for it to be rescinded. The Synod has asked the UK government to ban the advertising of these products in the UK and to support stricter legislation on exports to developing countries.

Source: Baby Milk Action, UK, Aug 1/1991

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We will be having a stall - M45/46 - at the Global Partnership Christmas market. Members of our team will be selling a range of our publications and garments like the 1992 Third World Calendar, the 1992 Almanac, the Third World Guide, the World Map Jigsaw and a range of T-shirts. We would also like to use the occasion to meet you, the readers, and talk about what subjects we should cover, what you like, dislike and think should be improved in the magazine.

Don't be shy, we value the opportunity to meet you. Last year was great fun. See you there this time... the dance and live music is pretty good too!

FRIDAY 15 NOVEMBER 11AM-8PM
SATURDAY 16 NOVEMBER 11AM-8PM
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(JUST BEHIND THE CATHOLIC CATHEDRAL, OFF VICTORIA STREET).
TUBE STATION: VICTORIA.

REFUGEES

Tuan's tale

From Vietnam to China, Macau to Hong Kong — one man's futile search for refuge

ON 6 October 1979 Trinh Anh Tuan celebrated his 18th birthday in northern Vietnam by playing the 'yellow music' associated with pre-communist South Vietnam. He was arrested with his friends after a scuffle with police. He escaped from prison and reached China in 1980.

For a year he lived in a camp with 40 other refugees in Long Chau. Then he was transferred to a more crowded camp at Ning Ming, where attempts were made to recruit him as a spy. He escaped again and arrived in Macau in July 1982.

Here the authorities decided to send him back to China in chains. Within two days Chinese guards forced him to cross the mined border back into Vietnam — his companions were killed when a mine exploded. Tuan was promptly arrested by Vietnamese soldiers.

In Vietnam he was suspected of spying for the Chinese and tortured. He was taken to Haiphong Prison. After several years of 're-education' he was released, but remained



Trinh Anh Tuan in detention: 'I no longer know where freedom and justice exist'.

under the watchful eye of Vietnamese security services.

In 1987 he was arrested for 'preaching reactionary propaganda'. He had told his friends about his experiences in the prisons of China, Macau and Vietnam. He was interrogated and tortured again. He began to develop serious health problems.

Released once more, he set out by boat for Hong Kong, where he was apprehended and taken to Whitehead Detention Centre. Doctors say there is no cure for the liver and

nervous disorders from which he now suffers. On 25 June 1991 he was advised by the Hong Kong Immigration Department that he would not be accepted as a political refugee. He will be returned to Vietnam.

'Maybe the world prefers to believe that there are no longer refugees, only illegal immigrants and economic migrants,' says Tuan. 'I no longer know where freedom and justice exist.'

Scott Roberts

WATER

Wild card in the West

Native Americans claim their rights

INDIAN rights are the wild card in the politics of the American West. Competition for resources grows ever fiercer; water, land, gas, oil and minerals become ever scarcer. Chief among these is water. Much of the West is an oasis civilization with too many demands on a limited supply. Native American water

Dancing on the 'rez': for Native Americans old traditions give strength for new battles.



claims are now pending on every major water source.

The upper reaches of the Wind River in Wyoming are home to the Shoshone and Arapahoe peoples. The reservation has become a patchwork of 300 Indian and Anglo farms. Each farmer has a claim to the river according to the date of settlement — the older your claim, the further up the queue you are for water.

In the early 1980s the State of Wyoming challenged Shoshone and Arapahoe water rights in court, claiming that they were not being used. The Indians made a stand. In 1989 the Supreme Court adjudicated that they were entitled to a third of what they were claiming — but far more than they were actually using.

Dave Neary, an Anglo farmer and member of the Crowheart Water Users Group says: 'This Indian water right is like a time bomb dropped years ago that's just exploded beneath us'. Water supplies to white farmers could soon be cut off.

The Tribal Council has voted to use water for recreation and developing fisheries, rather than allowing farmers to irrigate. The Council says this marks a return to Indian values, respecting the 'spirit of the water' and protecting its wildlife. It also hopes to get a piece of the lucrative tourist market.

There is great potential for conflict. Most

Nuclear future

The UN International Atomic Energy Agency is calling for 500 new nuclear-power plants to be commissioned between the years 2001 and 2010 'to meet increased energy demand and combat global warming'. Director General Hans Blix says that 'an annual start-up of some 50 nuclear-power plants per year from 2001, for which the industrial capacity exists, would cover 25 per cent of the electricity consumption which is expected by 2010.' Absurd though it seems, the campaign to present nuclear power as a 'green' option is well under way.

Source: ICEF Focus June 1991

of the farmers losing water are white. Fran Fox is one of the first to have his supply shut down. 'It's almost as though the politicians are waiting for someone to come apart at the seams, walk into a local store and blow everyone away to get something done,' he says ominously.

The tribes accept that some farmers will get less water but maintain that it's probably a good thing for the environment. Wes Martel of the Shoshone and Arapahoe Joint Business Council wants to build a future that is not dependent on federal subsidies or environmental degradation by mining and irrigation. 'We aim, through our water, to become the first Indian tribe that can afford itself,' he says.

Pratap Rughani

THE WAR ON DRUGS

Death penalty

China declares 'people's war'

THE authorities in Beijing are having to admit that drug smuggling and addiction, which they felt had been all but eradicated in the 1950s, are making a comeback.

'The drug horror is spreading like an epidemic disease,' says Wang Fang, head of the newly created National Narcotic Control Commission.

'We are launching a people's war against unlawful trafficking, planting and addiction. Security departments all over China have been advised to make this a top priority.'

Between 1985 and 1990 the authorities arrested 20,000 people suspected of drug offences and 80 per cent were found guilty. Convicted traffickers are usually sentenced to death, a verdict that customarily entails being taken into a prison yard and shot in the neck or back of the head. In June 1991

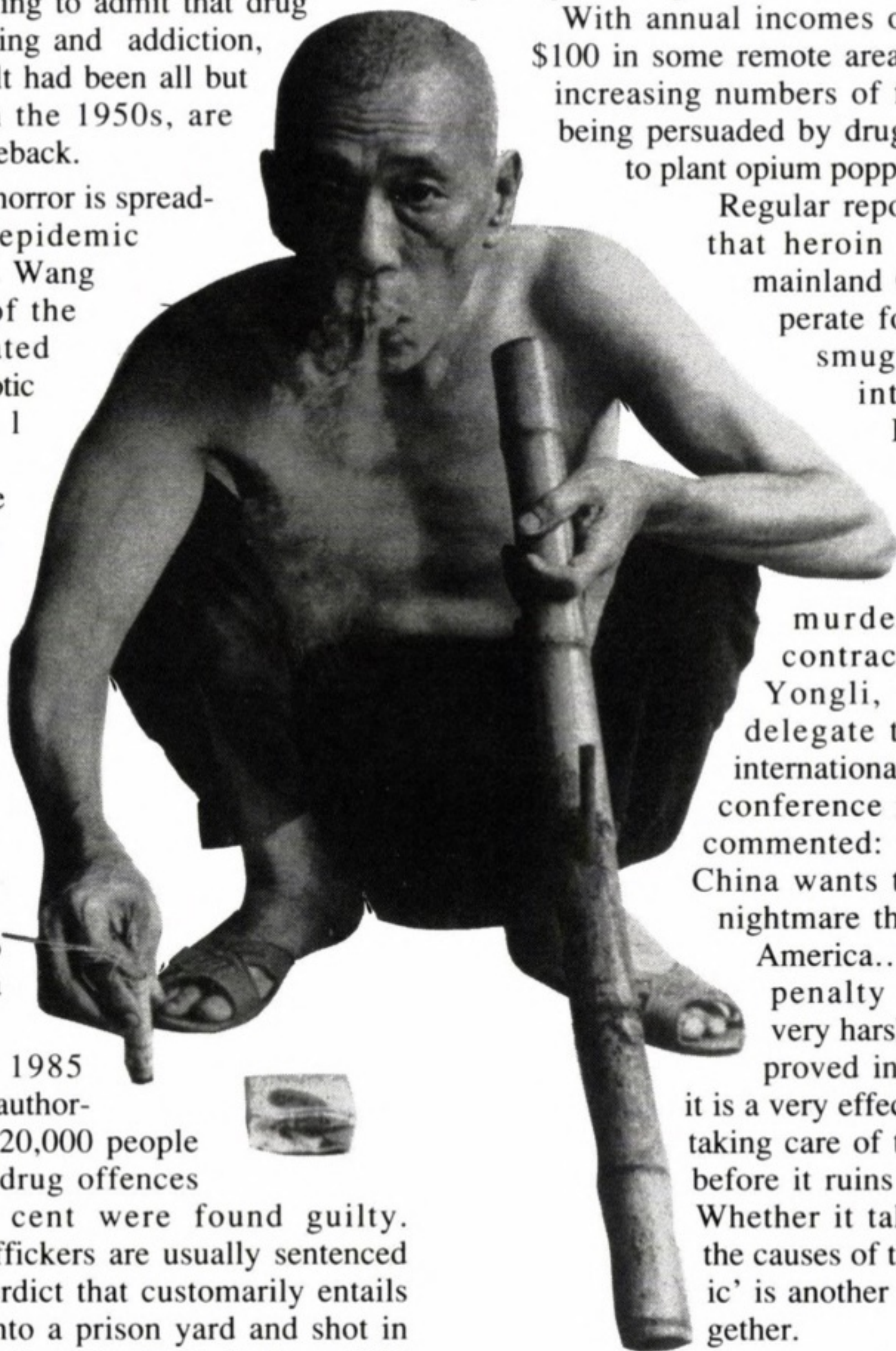
21 dealers received the death penalty in one province alone – all were from Yunnan, a region bordering on Myanmar/Burma and the 'Golden Triangle', the world's largest opium-producing area.

With annual incomes of less than \$100 in some remote areas of China, increasing numbers of farmers are being persuaded by drug merchants to plant opium poppies.

Regular reports suggest that heroin addicts in mainland China, desperate for cash, are smuggling guns into Hong Kong or slipping into the colony to fulfil

murder-for-hire contracts. Zhou Yongli, a Chinese delegate to a recent international anti-drugs conference in Beijing, commented: 'No one in China wants the kind of nightmare that exists in America... The death penalty may seem very harsh but, as we proved in the 1950s, it is a very effective way of taking care of the problem before it ruins a country.' Whether it takes care of the causes of the 'epidemic' is another matter altogether.

Ted Ferguson



FRANK FISCHBECK/CAMERA PRESS

Arms safari



A senior Thai military delegation recently visited South Africa with a view to buying arms. This is consistent with the Thai Government's policy of spreading its arms purchases. Washington announced a cut-off of military and economic aid to Bangkok after the 23 February military coup. But Thailand can still buy US arms with its own cash, and some 50 US-made M60 main battle tanks are currently being delivered.

Source: Far Eastern Economic Review Vol 153 No 35

Short of SNAGS

Sensitive New Age Guys (SNAGS) who share the cooking, cleaning and care of the kids remain a dream for most Australian women. A study of household work published recently found that women in Australia do 71 per cent of all unpaid work in the home and family.

A woman's home work-load increases from 18 hours a week to nearly 30 after marriage, while a man's typically expands from 15 to 17 hours.

Source: Australian Financial Review, Sydney, Australia

Rebirth

The former 'people's car' of East Germany, the Trabant, may get a second life in Egypt. It went out of production in Germany earlier this year, but is attractive to Egyptians because of its rust-proof plastic body and the low cost of its production machinery. Thankfully the car's notorious smoke-sputtering engine, a feature of the stalled traffic jams trying to leave East Germany before unification, will be replaced in Egypt by a Volkswagen motor.

Source: Berliner Morgenpost



One eyed jack

On the day Rajiv Gandhi would have turned 47, had he lived, the man believed to have masterminded his assassination died. His name was Sivarasan, and was known to the police as One-Eyed Jack because of his glass eye. He was a member of the Tamil Tigers, the guerilla group that wants a separate state in north-eastern Sri Lanka.

Evidence gathered since Gandhi was murdered on 21 May convinced the Indian police that Sivarasan was their man. They were tipped off that he was hiding in a house in Bangalore, but in the end were cheated of their quarry.

When the house was surrounded on 18 August Sivarasan and many of his colleagues committed suicide, mostly by swallowing cyanide capsules. This is a traditional policy of the Tigers, both men and women, showing the depth of their commitment. It also frustrates the authorities, giving them precious little evidence to use in future operations against the guerilla movement.

Source: The Economist August 24 1991

END

END
Quote

Organizers of strikes are ... breaking the law. Strikes interfere with Poland.

Lech Walesa, former leader of the Solidarity trade union, now President of Poland.

Paris will be one of the attractions of Euro Disneyland.

Nicolas de Schonen, Disney Communications Manager.

F I L M S M U S I C B O O K S



books

World Development Report 1991

by World Bank (Oxford University Press)

The World Bank has issued another in its series of annual reports designed to perpetuate illusions about the institution's objectives and priorities.

Subtitled *The Challenge of Development* this is actually not about development at all. It is about growth and the liberalization of international trade and capital. Chapter Two, for example, is headed 'Paths to Development' – yet the only path considered throughout this volume is a 'market-friendly' one.

Like its 1990 predecessor on *Poverty* (in which the issue of poverty received no serious treatment), this is highly biased in the way it selects and analyses case studies and statistics. Of course

no report can be truly objective: every author has a bias, including the author of this NI review.

But the World Bank tries to cloak its bias and promote its on-high air of authority by using language that is full of deception. Take labour issues. The report cannot acknowledge that cutting wages is both an integral element and an intended consequence of Bank-promoted adjustment programs. Instead they employ such euphemisms as 'the downward flexibility of real wages'.

They attribute high unemployment in Chile in the early 1980s to 'labor market rigidities, such as minimum wages and lack of wage flexibility'. No mention is made of the devastating job losses in those small and medium-sized firms which disappeared as a result of trade liberalization measures advocated by the Bank itself.

Structural adjustment is the World Bank's current religion and any evidence that it is not the true faith must be either omitted or twisted. So the Bank simply cannot deal with the fact that economies like South Korea and Taiwan have enjoyed high growth

rates despite being both state-interventionist and protectionist (the ultimate sins in adjustment terms). Hence the report goes to great lengths to rewrite history and make them seem more like free traders – yet the Bush Administration, for example, accepts that South Korea and Taiwan are among the most protectionist countries in the world.

Massaging its own figures in every way imaginable, the Bank still cannot make the case that adjustment programs have succeeded even in purely economic terms. Its own studies provide no conclusive evidence that the prevailing policies of the past decade have stimulated growth or sapped inflation.

Yet, despite the terrible social and environmental costs of adjustment, the report calls for more of the same. In other words more exporting, more austerity, more massive cuts in health and education budgets, more liberalization and privatization so as to open Southern economies to the international market.

There are no discussions here of alternative 'paths to develop-

ment', certainly not those based on grassroots involvement and the principles of greater self-reliance, equity and sustainability. Populist experiments of the past are discounted without any reference to the role the Bank itself played in undermining them.

This report, scraped free of the perfunctory development rhetoric aimed at politicians and the international media, is the clearest statement yet of the World Bank's agenda for the 1990s. The central message is found in the image on its cover: the world as a puzzle that must be pieced together by the global architects. Development, takes a back seat to the restructuring of Southern economies so as to expand international trade and investment on Northern corporate terms.

It is this very agenda which poses the greatest threat to the workers, producers and natural environments of the South – and thus provides us with the greatest 'challenge of development' in the years ahead.

Politics ☆
Entertainment ☆



films

Boyz N the Hood

directed by John Singleton

Hangin' with the Homeboys

directed by Joseph B Vasquez

On the New York subway a young black man is approached by three strangers – one black, two Latin – who, for no apparent reason, pick a fight with him. The other (mainly white) passengers draw back in horror, expecting bloodshed, until one of the men stands aside and announces: 'Ladies and gentlemen, you have just witnessed a performance by... Ghetto Theatre!'

For one nasty moment the viewer is in the position of the innocent commuter. By starting *Hangin' with the Homeboys* with this trick at the audience's expense, writer/director Joseph B Vasquez tilts not only at cultural preconceptions about black and Latin youth but also at preconceptions about the films that deal with them. It's all too easy to equate the 'new black wave' of US cinema with a school of 'mean streets' reportage typified by this

year's *New Jack City*. With its cynical mythologizing of the hip gangster image, its facile anti-drugs message tacked on as a mere pretext, *New Jack City* glibly reworked the tricks of the early 1970s blaxploitation cycle (*Shaft*, *Superfly*). The in-theatre fights that greeted the film's US release seemed to be fuelled directly by its glamorization of violence.

Violence erupted in US screenings of John Singleton's *Boyz N the Hood*, too, and as a result there is a question mark over the future commercial release of all black films. Yet here there is no glamorization: *Boyz* – subtitled 'Increase the peace' – is anti-violence to the hilt. Singleton explores the background to the gang wars and drive-by shootings

of South Central LA, demonstrating in unashamedly melodramatic fashion how violence erodes the community it breeds in. He makes good use of Ice Cube, a rapper with a particularly bloody-minded hard-man image, casting him as a disgruntled, quite unglamorous suburban boy who falls prey to his own frustration. Ice Cube dominates the film as its most rounded character, while other characters are almost Gary Cooperish in their social correctness. *Boyz* is too heavy-handed with its rhetoric but its mix of soap and the soapbox is riveting.

Politics ☆☆☆
Entertainment ☆☆☆

The Vasquez film is much lighter stuff – closer to the menacing

Art of confrontation: the controversial *Boyz N the Hood*.



banter of some Scorsese films. A boys' film in every way, it concerns four young men, two black, two Puerto Rican, all high on hope and hormones, out for a lark one New York night. It's intensely enjoyable, thanks to four strong leads, including Doug E Doug as racism-sensitive Willy, and Nestor Serrano as would-be cool cat Vinny. *Homeboys* doesn't press its point about black-Latin unity – that comes across in the acting. But it proves there is a lot more to the new cinema of the streets than guns and poses.

Politics ☆☆☆
Entertainment ☆☆☆



music

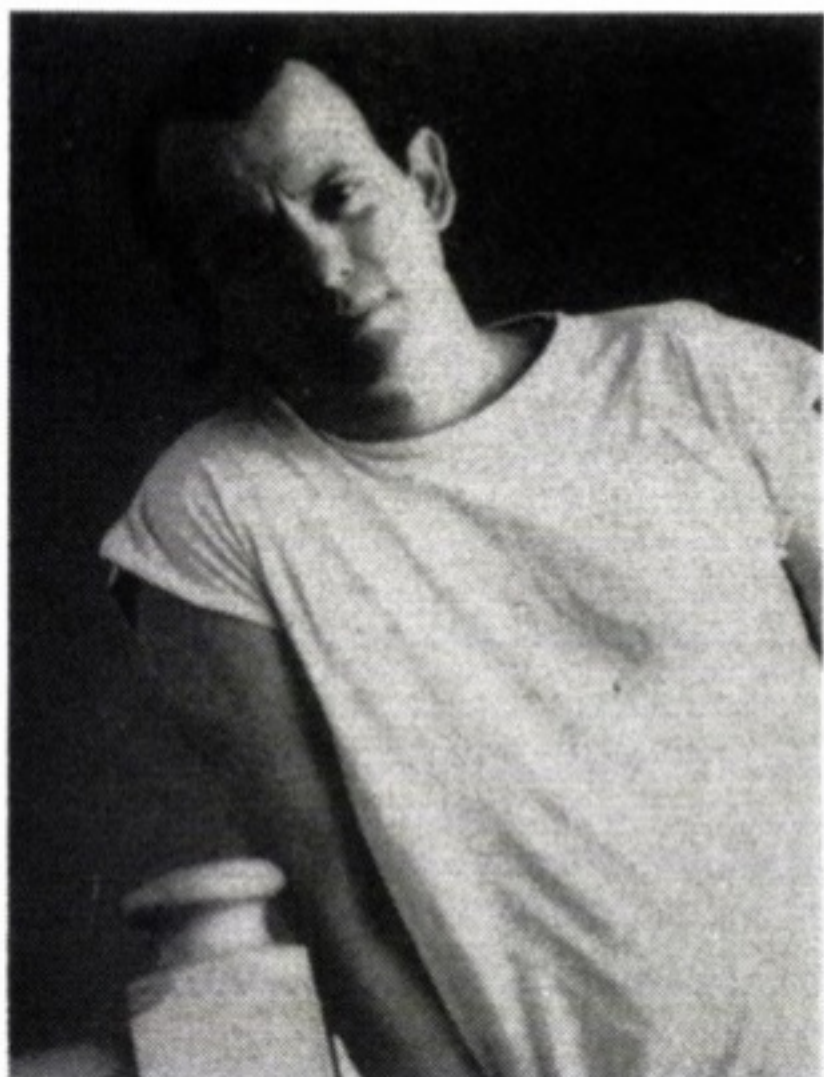
Cuba Classics 1: Greatest Hits

by Silvio Rodriguez (Luaka Bop/Warners)

After David Byrne's useful quartet of Brazilian compilations, he's now launched a 'Cuba Classics' series that promises to provide something other than the standard salsa fare. The series kicks off neatly with a compilation by singer-songwriter Silvio Rodriguez.

Rodriguez is, to all intents and purposes, a folk artist, who shows some affinities with Dylan or Neil Young, although he has more in common with the literary, instrumentally ornate French *chanson* or *variété* traditions. Rodriguez is associated with the *Nueva Trova* ('new song') movement, which mixed political seriousness with poetry and tradition. As a result of the US blockade of Cuba, Rodriguez's external influences were selective – he never got to hear Dylan until 1969 but counts the Beatles (along with Byron, Hoffman and Poe!) as more significant influences.

There are elements of salsa here, but only incidentally, and when Rodriguez mixes Cuban dance rhythms with his ballad style, the join is effortless. Whether doused in an almost Las Vegas ritziness or gliding elegantly through the balmy lyricism of a song like 'Como Esperando Abril', Rodriguez's fragile, high-



The elusive Silvio Rodriguez.

pitched voice is always compelling. The songs are often poetically oblique, personal verging on sentimental, and only rarely explicit – 'Playa Giron', for example, refers to the Bay of Pigs but is couched in terms of a scholarly inquisition into the art of political songwriting.

Throughout, Rodriguez's songs have a highly personal, pensive tone that engages the listener absolutely. The record's subtitle is 'Canciones Urgentes', and even when Rodriguez is at his glossiest and most elusive, urgency is the watchword.

Politics ★★★★★

Entertainment ★★★★★

STAR RATING

Excellent ★★★★★
Very good ★★★★★
Good ★★★★★
Fair ★★★★★
Poor ★★★★★

Reviews editor: Chris Brazier

THE classic

Paul Robeson

... being the singer who gave his life to black civil rights

'YOU and me, we sweat and strain, bodies all aching and wracked with pain... I get weary and sick of trying; I'm tired of living and scared of dying but Ol' Man River he just keeps rolling along.' The world is overflowing with popular music both inane and transcendent, but the twentieth century has produced few more resonant lines than those, just as it has produced few cultural heroes of the stature and integrity of Paul Robeson, who first recorded the words back in 1928.

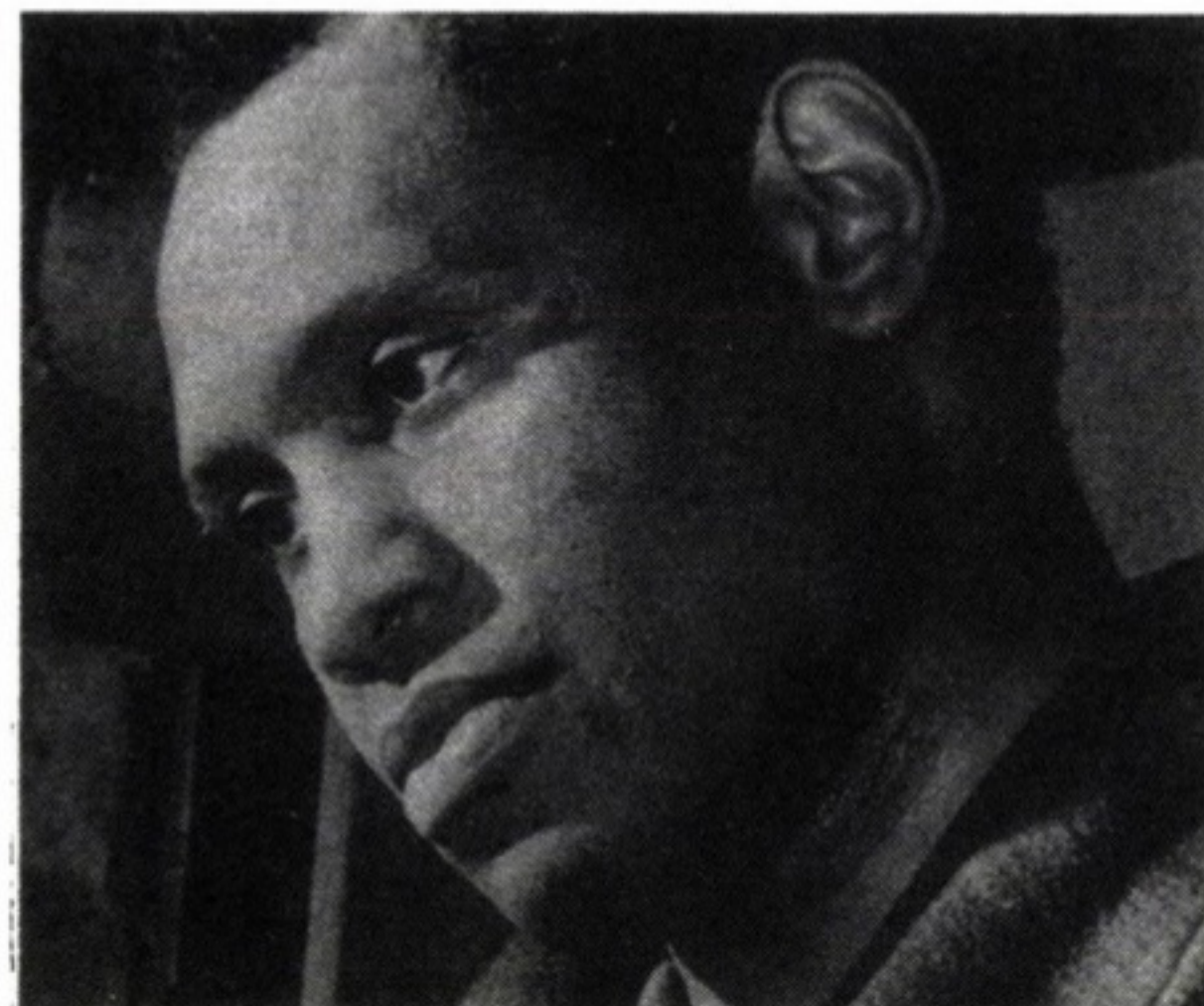
This song about the suffering of black slaves in the cotton fields is itself outstanding. But when sung by Robeson's rich, bass voice it becomes deeply moving, almost mythical.

What a voice this was. Miraculously deep, not merely in pitch but in texture, so that you are more inclined to describe it as 'profound'. Recordings of it are inevitably wreathed in a crackle and hiss that offends ears attuned to the purity of the digital age but there is no disguising the beauty of what was once called 'the best musical instrument wrought by Nature in our time'. Robeson's natural medium was the black spiritual but he was catholic in his taste, infusing the slightest song with a depth probably unimagined even by its composer.

If he had done nothing else but sing, Paul Robeson would have been worth celebrating. But it is impossible to detach the person from the voice. Born in 1896 the son of a former plantation slave, he excelled at university and qualified as a lawyer before resigning on being told his colour would debar him from the heights of the profession. He turned to acting, getting his break in a Eugene O'Neill play in which he had at one point to hum a tune. He sang a spiritual instead – and his singing career mushroomed from there.

At this stage Robeson believed he would do the black cause more good by excelling in art than by campaigning. But by the end of the 1930s, a decade spent mainly in England, he had become increasingly committed and radical in his views. In part this was because he had discovered his African heritage, and he sought to put across a positive view of Africa in a series of movies, only to find his role consistently twisted. The worst case was *Sanders of the River*, which turned out in the final cut to be an embarrassing glorification of British colonialism.

By the end of the 1930s he had visited fascist Berlin, communist Moscow and Republican Spain at the height of the Civil War. He began to put his art and his now-considerable fame at the service of the causes he cared about – and from his return to the US in 1940 that meant primarily civil rights for his own black American people. But he was also an internationalist, concerned about colonized people all over the world. Given the time he lived in, that almost inevitably made him a communist, faithful to the example of the Soviet Union – even



though he was never a card-carrying member.

By 1947 his politics were already getting him in trouble and denting his popularity. He announced that he was abandoning concerts for two years to 'talk up and down the nation against race hatred and prejudice... It seems that I must raise my voice, but not by singing pretty songs'. The House Committee of Un-American Activities listed him as a person 'invariably found supporting the Communist Party and its front organizations'. He was banned from appearing in some towns and riots broke out in others.

Seen before as an exemplary black American, the McCarthyite 1950s now cast him definitively in the role of ungrateful, unAmerican troublemaker. The US Government withdrew his passport in 1950, performing became almost impossible and, under constant FBI surveillance, he tumbled into a period of great isolation and depression.

He had something of a resurgence when his passport was restored in 1958 and he moved to England. But in Moscow in 1961 he had a mental breakdown and attempted suicide. The years until his death in 1975 were lived either in psychiatric clinics (he endured an astonishing 54 ECT shock treatments) or in seclusion, eventually in Harlem.

It was the saddest of ends to a life that had been so full of strength, clarity and principle. Some have attributed the collapse to his discovery of the true nature of Stalin's regime but he never publicly dissociated himself from the Soviet Union. More likely his breakdown was caused by the decade of victimization, though he was also deeply disturbed by black campaigners' failure to acknowledge his ground-breaking contribution to the civil-rights movement. Not all felt the same. When the conservative newspaper *Herald Tribune* had the gall to accuse Robeson of jumping on the civil-rights bandwagon on his final return to the US in 1964, a letter complained indignantly 'Hell, man, he built that wagon'.

But when you listen to *The Voice* it is the prime of life you are hearing, the prime of a magnificent talent dedicated to the service of the oppressed the world over. Ol' Man River can still be the song for which we remember Paul Robeson – but it should be in the version he used at political rallies, to which he added the line 'I must keep fighting until I'm dying'.

Chris Brazier



QUESTIONS

...that have always intrigued you about the world will appear in this, your section, and be answered by other readers. Please address your answers and questions to 'curiosities'.

Why do peasant women in Bolivia wear bowler hats? Is there a historical connection with British bowler hats?

● The story I've heard is that they were dumped on the Bolivian market by a Manchester hatter who had over-produced. It happened in the mid-nineteenth century – a period when Britain was the main commercial power in Latin America. Dumping of manufactured clothing was quite common during this period – and had a very destructive effect on local economies. There are even stories of British-made ponchos flooding the Argentinian market! Thankfully, the Bolivian bowlers are mainly locally produced these days.

Maria Martin, Bradford, UK

● The 'bowler' hats worn by Bolivian women seem to have nothing to do with those worn by British businessmen. They are derived from Spanish peasant hats. The Bolivian brims, it is true, are narrower.

Claire Diamond, London, UK



● One theory is that they were derived from the round hats worn by the Spanish Conquistadores.

Chris Lee, London, UK

Who – or what – was Bretton Woods?

● Bretton Woods is the place in New Hampshire, US, where the 1944 conference which founded the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank was held. Their main purpose was to make monetary relationships between member countries work more smoothly after the end of the Second World War. The Great Depression of the 1930s, which helped give rise to fascism, was

intended never to happen again.

Penelope Wheeler, London, UK.

Where is the 'parrot's beak'?

● I know of two – but I suspect there are many more. One is the southernmost point of Vietnam – and a very plausible beak it is too, as it dips into the South China Sea. Rather less impressive is the one in north-east Brazil. It's just south of Belém and so called because of the shape formed by the boundaries of the state of Pará, Tocantins and Maranhão.

P Keat, Oxford, UK

What is globalization?

● It's the system of production favoured by large companies these days. Products – for example Adidas sports gear or Amstrad computers – are not made in one country by a factory belonging to the named company. Instead different parts of production are contracted out to smaller local producers competing with each other on price.

It means that the companies of the rich world can use labour in the poor world with no commitment to investment, or to health-and-safety regulations. And if trade-union activity in a Third World country causes conditions to improve and costs to rise, the rich world company can simply pull out and put its work elsewhere, where wages may be lower and trade unions outlawed.

R James, Scunthorpe, UK

What is the only type of fruit you are not allowed to carry on public transport in Thailand – and why?

● It's called the Durian – also known as the 'stinking fruit'. Which should answer the second part of your question. Not a misnomer, I am assured. It's like strawberries and cream to the taste buds, but 100-year-old Camembert to the olfactories.

Fiona Macaulay, Oxford, UK

AWAITING YOUR ANSWERS:

● **Where is Idi Amin now?**

T Aziz, Reading, UK

● **In calculating the Gross National Product no account is taken of the of the vegetables I grow on my allotment. Does the World Bank in calculating GNPs take account of the crops grown by Third World peasants on their plots of land? If not, why not?**

David Pitt, Henley, UK

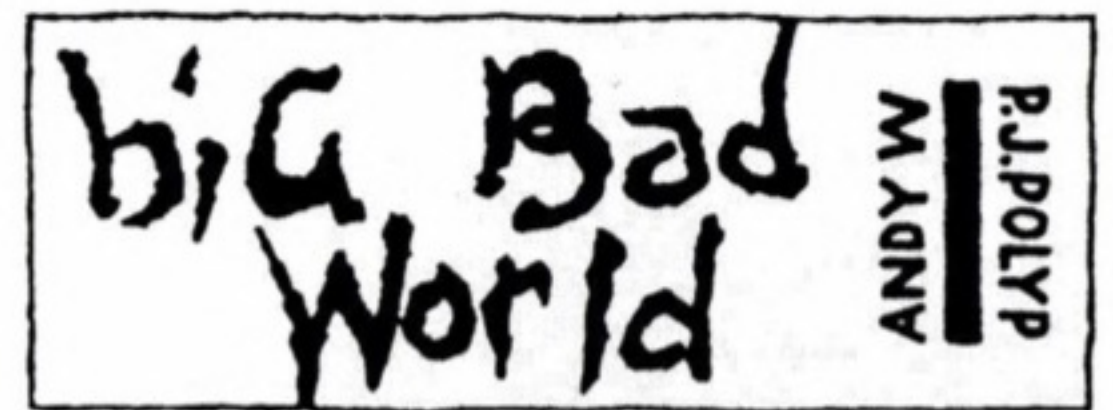
● **Does anyone know what the 'Football War' was all about?**

B Knight, Toronto, Canada

● **Can someone please explain the difference between GNP and GDP?**

Beth Cousins, Manchester, UK

If you have any questions please send them to **Curiosities, New Internationalist, 55 Rectory Road, Oxford OX4 1BW, UK**, or to your local NI office (see inside front cover for addresses).



A taste for tigers

Is deep ecology a politics designed for well-heeled nature lovers? Ramachandra Guha gives a view from the Indian subcontinent.

WHILE in the US recently I was struck by how vigorous and widespread the environmental movement has become. There is a great deal of popular involvement across a wide range of issues, including pollution and urban environments.

But concern about the protection of wilderness and national parks seems to have become the most influential strand – and one that elicits intense moral fervour. Over a period of time the thinkers involved have been developing a theory of ‘deep ecology’ which they claim is applicable not merely to the US but to the entire world. And it makes wilderness protection a priority.

This is all very well for a developed country like the US. But I think it has serious negative implications when transferred to India or Africa. If the protection of national parks, wilderness and biological diversity becomes a *primary* concern here then the other more basic environmental concerns, like the provision of fuelwood and clean drinking water or the control of pollution, will inevitably become marginal.

I come from a left-wing tradition. For me questions of distribution are always central, not least in the environmental debate. And in India it is difficult to identify with the kind of philosophical speculations which American deep ecologists indulge in the question of equality of the species, for example.

Let me explain. In India we have a fairly good system of around 400 national parks covering about four per cent of our land area. Eighteen months ago the Government set up a high-powered committee to reassess forest policy. The chair of this committee was a senior member of the World Wildlife Fund who believed that the function of the forests should be simply to protect biological diversity. This is the point of view of the wilderness movement and it is extremely influential, drawing support from people in international organizations who have close links with the political elite. But it has no social base.

The man in charge of the committee used global concern with climatic change and biological diversity to bolster his own love of the wilderness. In his view the main enemy were local villagers. His policy would be to extend the whole system of protected areas from four per cent to maybe 20 per cent of India’s land area.

In effect he was saying: ‘These are compelling issues. This loss of biological diversity, this climatic change, this soil erosion all point to a crisis. We are all going down the tube. The only way is for each of the 35,000 forest guards to have a gun and protect these areas.’

Now, he’s representative of a group of wealthy nature lovers who – in India at least – don’t have any sensitivity at all to human suffering. What is happening today is that these moral arguments about ‘deep ecology’, about ‘anthropocentrism’, being the same as arrogance, are being used to pursue what I see as very narrow ends.

I think it’s important to restore the balance. We must look at forestry from the point of view of restoring local control and stopping industrial exploitation. We need to design policy alternatives which have some environmental sensitivity but are also sensitive to the survival needs of the people living in the area.

Before the British took over the forests in the nineteenth century there were a variety of mechanisms by which local communities managed forests. Some environmentalists in India today recognize the existence of these traditions of responsible management and the greater knowledge of ecology they displayed. They have argued that the forests should be given back to village communi-

ties. The State has clearly failed, they say.

To my mind this is too simplistic. Those communities have changed. There has been a divergence of interests, a growth of individualism. Now there is a greater market for forest produce, which means that there is greater incentive for influential individuals in a village to break customary sanctions.

In some areas, because of the growth of powerful popular movements like the Chipko women ‘tree-huggers’, people do work together in a concerted way for the protection and management of



LEEDS ANIMATION WORKSHOP

forests. But for large parts of India this is not the case. There is also a long-standing suspicion of the intentions of the Forest Department with which local people have often been involved in violent conflict. Except in some isolated cases, giving state forests back to local communities simply won’t work.

What will work is a genuine partnership between the State and local communities. This is beginning to emerge in some areas. It is based on a fundamental reorientation of state policy so that there is no industrial exploitation of state forests at all.

In West Bengal there’s a very interesting experiment, with the State and local people working together. The Forest Department has signed agreements with 800 individual villages. The villages provide protection – for example, they don’t allow grazing and they keep out strangers. In return villagers get access to fuel and fodder when it’s harvested and they get a percentage of anything sold. This agreement has been working well. Regeneration of forests has been good and tensions have been diminished. It shows how the State and village communities can act as a check on each other.

But there is, I am afraid, no great cause for optimism. The processes of environmental destruction are so powerful. And the section of society which most wants to save the tiger is the one that also consumes most intensively. A conflict of interests between these people and the poor people who depend upon the forests for their livelihood seems to me to be inevitable. ■

Ramachandra Guha lives in New Delhi. His books include *The Unquiet Woods; Ecological Change and Peasant Resistance in the Himalayas* (Oxford University Press in the UK, University of California Press in the US) and *This Fissured Land; An Ecological History of India* (forthcoming from OUP).

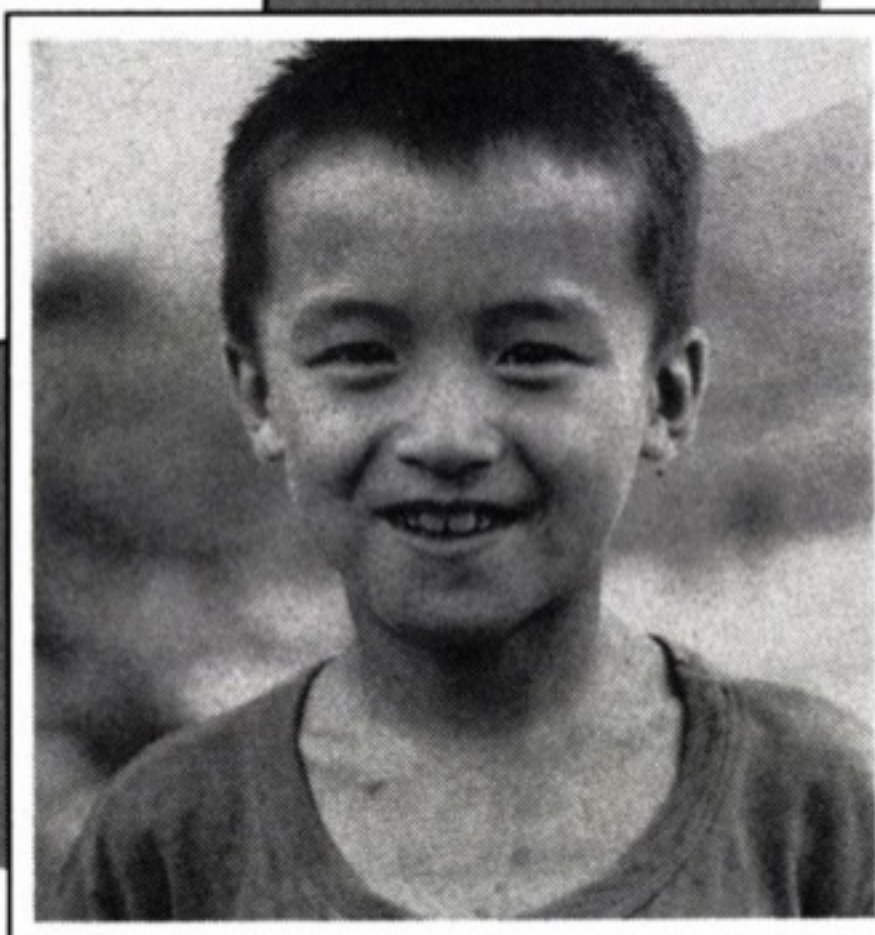
China

LONG the darling of Western idealists, China's image crumbled when the tanks went into Tiananmen Square on 4 June 1989. Since then China has been gradually wooing back tourists, investors and bankers.

China's Open Door policy is still very new for, with a civilization stretching back thousands of years, the country has suffered from its contact with outsiders.

For the first half of this century, life in war-torn China was painful and short. When Mao Zedong and the Red Army declared liberation in October 1949, they swept away feudalism and made their priority delivering the basic needs of long-suffering peasants. A country that had endured regular famines found there was enough food when it was fairly distributed; ordinary villagers were trained as primary health workers decades before the United Nations started promoting the idea. Life expectancy which stood at just 36 years in 1948-9 rose swiftly and steadily and has now reached 70.

But Mao made terrible mistakes too. The Great Leap Forward of 1958-59 pressed ahead with agricultural collectivization and industrialization and was designed to bring



China to the economic level of Britain within 15 years. Instead it brought widespread famine. In 1966 Mao plunged China into the Cultural Revolution which ended only with his death in 1976. Overtly this aimed to stop the revolution stagnating and in that at least it succeeded – the period is now remembered

as 'ten years of turmoil'. Students humiliated and tortured teachers; gangs of teenage Red Guards swarmed across the country destroying ancient monuments; and intellectuals were sent to labour in the countryside.

Since the deaths of Mao and the much-loved Zhou Enlai, the

country has been controlled by Deng Xiaoping. Denounced by Mao as 'a capitalist roader' Deng has retained much of the economic edifice of communism, while encouraging foreign investment and market forces. Whole villages working on the land in collectives have been replaced by solitary figures tilling their separate patches – and by the re-emergence of rich peasants.

The Communist Party has maintained its political dictatorship. This rigid control extends to the most intimate areas of people's lives. Power is centred in the work unit, which allocates housing and runs a neighbourhood spying system feeding into the local Party network. Corruption is everywhere.

Minority groups suffer. As China was meting out long prison sentences to Tiananmen demonstrators under cover of the Gulf War, the exiled Dalai Lama was asking why the West had been so keen to defend Kuwait but was silent during China's decades-long occupation of Tibet.

And as 1997 approaches, Hong Kong citizens shift uneasily at the prospect of reverting to the control of their large neighbour to the north.

Sue Robson

AT A glance

Excellent ★★★★★
Good ★★★★
Fair ★★★
Poor ★★
Appalling ★



POLITICS

Communist party rules, but now combining planned economy with market sector.



1983



INCOME DISTRIBUTION ★★★

Cheap housing through work units. Unemployment 2.6 %

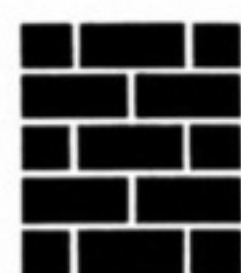
1983: ★★★



LITERACY ★★★

Adult literacy 69%, less for women. Complexity of Chinese characters: children learn to read slowly and late.

1983: ★★★



SELF-RELIANCE ★★★

Increasing reliance on foreign aid; external debt is 8.75% of GNP.

1983: ★★★



FREEDOM ★

Dissidents jailed without trial. Neighbourhood spying systems. Less freedom since Tiananmen clampdown.

1983: ★★



POSITION OF WOMEN ★★★

Great victory over feudal oppression, but widespread prejudice and very few women at the top.

1983: ★★★



LIFE EXPECTANCY ★★★★★

70 years. Good basic medicine and self-help prolong life. (US 77 years).

1983: ★★★★★

Leader Premier Li Peng. Deng Xiaoping has now resigned his party and army posts and has an 'elder statesperson' role.

Economy GNP per capita \$330 (US \$19,840)

Currency: The monetary unit is renminbi yuan (literally, 'people's money'). Black market is rife.

Exports: Food and oil, clothing and textiles.

Imports: Industrial products; machinery and chemicals.

People 1,139,100,000

Health Infant mortality 27 per 1,000 live births (US 10 per 1,000).

Culture Around 80 per cent of people are peasants. Communist Party has 48,000,000 members. Minorities include Tibetans, Uighurs, Kazakhs and Mongols.

Religion: Buddhism, Daoism, Islam and Christianity. Around 40,000 temples, monasteries, mosques and churches are officially open to the public.

Language: Mandarin Chinese, written in characters. Also Cantonese in the south, numerous dialects, and minority languages.

Sources: The State of World Population 1991, The State of the World's Children 1991, World Development Report 1990, Beijing Review.

Last profiled in January 1983



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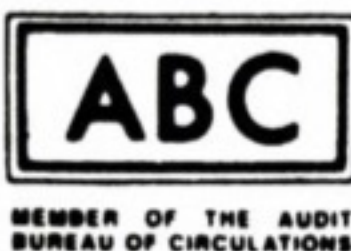
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